Inside Autocracy: Political Survival and the Modern Prince

Inside Autocracy: Political Survival and the Modern Prince

Abstract

Virtually all African autocrats now govern with parliaments and organize regular, multiparty elections. They have little choice. Since the end of the Cold War, Western governments have required nominally democratic institutions in exchange for aid, investment, and debt relief. With violent repression impossible to conceal from the international community, life as an autocrat has grown more difficult. Since 1989, autocrats forced to govern with nominally democratic institutions have been 80% more likely to lose power than their counterparts. Between 1986 and 2000, the number of autocracies in Africa fell from 45 to 30.

The rate of democratization has slowed, for Africa's autocrats learned to survive democratic institutions. To understand how, this dissertation focuses on the Republic of Congo, ruled by Denis Sassou Nguesso for all but five years since 1979. Using original data on the Congolese elite, their political parties, elections, and the security apparatus, this dissertation finds that Africa's autocrats confront challenges old and new with different constraints. Accordingly, they find different solutions.

Autocrats once relied on single parties to prevent elite coups. They now secure compliance with social tools. By redefining the pool of candidates for the regime's critical positions, Africa's autocrats employ a "politics of hope," which induces loyalty when elites are excluded from the regime. To monitor appointees, Africa's contemporary autocrats create social institutions, in which new recruits interact with trusted aides. Autocrats supplement these with parallel governments, which force

elites separated by cleavages to compete against each other. When Africa's autocrats deploy these monitoring devices effectively, they forgo arbitrary purges in favor of tenure policies that reward competence.

The international community's insistence on elections creates "focal moments," when citizens sense their shared discontent. Since they believe international attention will shield them from repression, opposition leaders mobilize unrest. This institutional landscape compels autocrats to fashion electoral alliances with opposition leaders. By joining the regime they once impugned, opposition leaders sacrifice public credibility for ministerial perquisites. Popular goodwill constitutes an insurance policy, and so Africa's autocrats commission surrogates to generate it. With repression less credible, autocrats construct their security apparatuses to threaten violence without provoking it.

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To the people of Congo, who deserve better.

Acknowledgments

This dissertation is the product of sacrifices too great to fully acknowledge.

At Harvard I benefited from the wise counsel, unfailing generosity, and regular encouragement of my dissertation committee: Bob Bates, Steve Levitsky, and James Robinson. Their numerous contributions defy description. I hope the dissertation meets the standards their scholarship embodies.

The few students of Congo are models of courage and moral character. I am fortunate to call them friends. Patrice Yengo responded to an email from a young graduate student who had never visited the Republic of Congo. Patrice's willingness to trust me made this project possible. John Clark, as all anglophones who study Congo know, is a rare combination of incisiveness and generosity. He encouraged the project from its first difficult steps – when I emailed him from a Johannesburg hotel room, having just been deported – to the final stages. My debts to them both are tremendous.

This dissertation would not have been possible without generous financial support. The Social Science Research Council and Mellon Foundation had faith in the project from its earliest incarnations. The National Science Foundation, United States Institute of Peace, and Smith Richardson Foundation funded numerous trips to Congo. At Harvard, the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies, Institute for Quantitative Social Science, and Graduate Society provided critical financial support and wonderful academic homes.

Sadly, my greatest debts must go unacknowledged. During newly two years in Congo I met countless individuals whose sacrifices for their country are extraordinary. They inspired the dissertation. I hope the dissertation meets their expectations for it.

Late in the writing process – as I toyed with decamping for Yale and she to Washington – I met Erin. Her steady belief in the project brought it to fruition. I valued her support more than I can express.

It is easier, given his nature, for a human being to rule all the other kinds of animals than to rule human beings. But when we reflected that there was Cyrus, a Persian, who acquired very many people, very many cities, and very many nations, all obedient to himself, we were thus compelled to change our mind to the view that ruling human beings does not belong among those tasks that are impossible, or even among those that are difficult, if one does it with knowledge.

– Xenophon, *The Education of Cyrus*

If we eat caviar and we drink champagne, what is [the Western media's] problem? How do our habits concern them? How are their reproaches even legitimate? At most, only Congolese citizens have a right to remark on our consumption habits. But they choose not to. ...I don't have to apologize for staying at the Crillon, Meurice, Bristol, Plaza Athenée, or Georges V when I travel to Paris. That would be a travesty.

– Denis Sassou Nguesso

It's part of a psychological game, about the attitudes of politicians and, above all, military officers. Particularly with the [International Criminal Court], they're aware that people are watching them. People are ready to leave. At the slightest sign of trouble, people will leave the country. And possibly even Denis Sassou Nguesso.

– Wilfried Kivouvou

Main Characters

Blaise Adoua: Appointed chief of the *Garde Républicaine* after Sassou Nguesso reclaimed power in 1997. Implicated in the Beach massacres, he was later appointed chief of the Brazzaville Military Zone.

Pierre Anga: Complicit in the assassination of Marien Ngouabi. An Owando native, he was incarcerated in the 1980s for plotting a *coup d'état* and ultimately killed in 1987.

Émile Biayenda: The only cardinal in the history of Congo's Catholic church. Ngouabi's confidant, he was assassinated on March 22, 1977.

Jean-Michel Bokamba-Yangouma: Secretary General of the *Confédération Syndicale Congolaise*, the state labor union, between 1974 and the National Conference in 1991. After his daughter died aboard UTA flight 772, he left the PCT and rebranded himself a democrat. He fled into exile in October 1997, only to return in 2001 and, in 2009, fulsomely endorse Sassou Nguesso's reelection campaign.

Edith Lucie Bongo Ondimba: Sassou Nguesso's eldest daughter and, between 1990 and her death in 2009, First Lady of Gabon. A doctor, Edith Lucie financed Serge Blanchard Oba's *Mouvement pour la solidarité et le développement* (MSD) political party.

Omar Bongo Ondimba: President of Gabon between 1967 and his death in 2009. Though eight years Sassou Nguesso's elder, Bongo was also Sassou Nguesso's son-in-law, having married daughter Edith in 1990. Long France's closest African ally, Bongo's *Société Nationale Pétrolière Gabonaise* (SNPG) was the model for Sassou Nguesso's *Société Nationale des Pétroles du Congo* (SNPC).

Mathias Dzon: Sassou Nguesso's Minister of Finance between 1997 and 2002, and member of his Avenue Montaigne "embassy" in Paris during the 1997 civil war effort. After being terminated and subsequently losing his 2002 National Assembly campaign in Gamboma, Plateaux, Dzon emerged as among Sassou Nguesso's chief critics. He is president of the *Union Patriotique pour le Renouveau National* (UPRN).

Joe Washington Ebina: Scion of one of Congo's few independently wealthy family, he founded an NGO to lobby on behalf of the victims of the March 4, 2012, explosions that destroyed large swathes of Brazzaville. President of the *Fondation Ebina*, a charitable group, he was detained briefly in 2013 after criticizing the government's recovery efforts.

Blaise Elenga: Longtime legal counsel of *Congolaise de Trading* (Cotrade), the SNPC's marketing arm, before its dissolution in 2010. He also owned several of the shell companies that Sassou Nguesso used to evade Congo's private creditors.

Germain Céphas Ewangui: President of the *Fédération Congolaise des Droits de l'Homme* (FECODHO), the government's pseudo human rights NGO founded to discredit the *Observatoire Congolais des Droits de l'Homme* (OCDH).

Denis Gokana: Second CEO of the *Société Nationale des Pétroles du Congo* and center of the system of shell companies designed to evade Congo's private creditors. Although removed in 2011, he oversees the SNPC's *conseil d'administration*. He was elected to the National Assembly from Boundji, Cuvette, in 2012.

Bruno Itoua: Founding CEO of the *Société Nationale des Pétroles du Congo*. After his removal in 2004, he was appointed Minister of Energy and later Minister of Scientific Research. An honorary nephew, he was elected to the National Assembly from Ollombo, Plateaux, in 2007 and again in 2012.

Maurice Morel Kihouzou: Loyal to Sassou Nguesso during the 1997 civil war despite being an ethnic Lari. After collaborating with Sassou Nguesso's Cobra militia during their post-war pillage, he was appointed mayor of Makélékélé. Famously unresponsive to the local population, his widow's peak haircut approximates Sassou Nguesso's.

Bernard Kolélas: President of th□ *Mouvement Congolais pour la Démocratie et le Développement Intégral* (MCDDI), an ethnic Lari from the Pool region, Mayor of Brazzaville between 1994 and 1997, and Prime Minister in September 1997. His Ninja militia fought briefly alongside Lissouba's Cocoye militia during the 1997 civil war. In exile between October 1997 and October 2005, he declared his "solemn support" for Sassou Nguesso upon his return.

Guy Brice Parfait Kolélas: Son of Bernard Kolélas and chief supporter of the electoral alliance with Sassou Nguesso in 2005. After co-directing Sassou Nguesso's presidential campaign in 2009, he was appointed Minister of Fisheries in 2007. He was elected to the National Assembly from Kinkala, Pool, in 2007 and 2012.

Justin Lekoundzou: Complict in the assassination of Marien Ngouabi and a government minister throughout the 1980s. A senior PCT official during the 1990s, Lekoundzou was appointed Minister for Reconstruction upon Sassou Nguesso's 1997 return. After serving as Defense Minister between 1999 and 2002, Lekoundzou was a central target of the PCT *refondation* effort, which began in 2004 and culminated with October 2006 party congress. He was elected to the National Assembly from

Boundji in 2002. In 2009 Lekoundzou founded the *Association Marien Ngouabi et Éthique* as a rallying point for Sassou Nguesso's opponents.

Pascal Lissouba: Congo's first – and, at this writing, only – democratically elected president. In office between 1992 and 1997, he also founded the *Union Pan-Africaine de la Démocratie Sociale* (UPADS), which has proven virtually ineffectual as an opposition party since Sassou Nguesso's return.

Henri Lopés: Denis Sassou Nguesso's longtime ambassador to France, often regarded as the dean of the African diplomatic corps in Paris. He is also a prominent member of the editorial board for *Géopolitique Africaine*.

Michel Mampouya: Claimed the presidency of MCDDI in December 1997, after Kolélas fled, and accepted the Ministry of Mines in Sassou Nguesso's November 1997 government. Mampouya was dismissed in 2002, and appointed Vice President of the *Conseil Economique et Sociale*.

Martin Mberi: Claimed the presidency of UPADS in October 1997, after Lissouba fled, and accepted the Ministry of Construction in Sassou Nguesso's November 1997 government. Mberi was dismissed in 2001, virtually marking the end of his political career.

Alphonse Massamba-Débat: President of Congo between 1963 and 1968, when he was deposed by the clique of northern military officers led by Ngouabi. He was assassinated on March 25, 1977.

Pierre Mboungou Mboungou: A senior officer in the Lissouba military and chief instructor of the Cocoye militia. He organized the *Mouvement National pour la Libération du Congo* in early 1998 and, after agreeing to the Libreville Accords in December 1999, was promised the premiership. Instead, he was appointed to the High Commission for Ex-Combattants.

André Milongo: Elected Prime Minister by the National Conference in 1991 and, a year later, founded the *Union pour la Démocratie et la République - Mwinda* (UDR-Mwinda). Among Congo's few unimpeachable political leaders, Milongo refused to go into exile in October 1997 and emerged as a chief critic of the new government. He died in 2007, and shortly thereafter his wife, Marie-Therèse was appointed mayor of Boko, Pool.

Hilaire Moko: Sassou Nguesso's nephew and chief of the *Direction Générale de la Securité Présidentielle* between 1997 and 2007. He was dispatched to Paris thereafter, where he served as military *attaché*.

Jean-Marie Michel Mokoko: Appointed military chief of staff in 1987. Estranged from Sassou Nguesso, he ensured that the National Conference of 1991 remained sovereign. In 2005 Sassou Nguesso appointed him Counselor for Peace and Security in Africa.

Yves Motando: An army captain at the time of Ngouabi's assassination. After overseeing Sassou Nguesso's civil war apparatus, he was appointed military chief of staff in October 1997.

Adelaïde Mougany: Minister of Commerce between 2002 and 2008, when she was appointed Minister of Small Enterprises. She was married to Ange Diawara, who was brutally murdered by Sassou Nguesso in 1973.

Jean Francois Ndenguet: Chief of police since 1997 and a Cobra commander before that. He was implicated in the Beach massacre of 1999.

Marien Ngouabi: Seized power from Alphonse Massamba-Débat in 1968 and then founded the *Parti Congolais du Travail*. Assassinated by a group of northern military officers who suspected.

Emmanuel Ngouélondélé: Chief of Sassou Nguesso's intelligence apparatus in the 1980s and, since

roughly 2002, among the regime's most acerbic critics. His son, Hugues, is married to Ninelle, Sassou Nguesso's daughter; his daughter, Michelle, is married to Sassou Nguesso's nephew, Edgard.

Hugues Ngouélondélé: Married to daughter Ninelle Sassou Nguesso. He was appointed Mayor of Brazzaville in 2003 and elected to the National Assembly from Brazzaville in 2002 and 2007, and from Gamboma in 2012.

Maurice Nguesso: Sassou Nguesso's older brother and the patriarch of the Nguesso family. He owns Likouala SA, to which Total transferred its share of the Likouala oil field in 2001. It was worth roughly $500 million in 2002.

Cśear Wilfried Nguesso: Denis Sassou Nguesso's nephew, president of the Club 2002 PUR political party, and the head of SOCOTRAM.

Pastor Ntoumi: Elected president of the *Conseil National de la Résistance* in 1999, and chief protagonist of the Pool conflict thereafter. Many Congolese citizens believe he founded his Nsilouou rebel group at the regime's behest.

Pierre Oba: Sassou Nguesso's nephew and Minister of Interior between 1997 and 2005, when he was appointed Minister of Mines.

Jean Dominique Okemba: Sassou Nguesso's nephew, Secretary General of the *Conseil Nationale de Securité*, and head of the *Grande Loge du Congo*. Often regarded as the regime's *de facto* vice president, he also presides over BGFI Congo.

Jean Paul Pigasse: Manages *Les Dépêches de Brazzaville*, Denis Sassou Nguesso's chief propaganda outlet and Brazzaville's only daily newspaper, as well as *Géopolitique Africaine*. He is close with several high ranking French conservatives, including Alain Juppé and Jean-François Probst.

André Okombi Salissa: A Cobra commander during the 1997 civil war and minister in every government until 2012. He provoked Sassou Nguesso's ire after refusing to dissolve his *Comité d'Action pour la Défense de la Démocratie - Mouvement Jeunesse* (CADD-MJ).

Antoinette Sassou Nguesso: Sassou Nguesso's wife and Congo's First Lady. A native of Pointe-Noire, she helped broker several political alliances between Sassou Nguesso and the region's political leaders.

Denis Sassou Nguesso: President of Congo for all but five years since 1979.

Denis Christel Sassou Nguesso: Sassou Nguesso's eldest recognized son and the chief merchant of Congo's oil. His shopping sprees in Paris, Dubai, and Marbella attracted the attention of Western journalists.

Claudia Lemboumba Sassou Nguesso: Sassou Nguesso's daughter and communications counselor. She is also Denis Christel's only full sister.

Jean-Marie Tassoua: Central to Sassou Nguesso's 1997 civil war effort and Minister of Energy until 2002. Elected to the National Assembly from Dongou, Likouala in 2007, he has held a series of leadership positions on the Economic and Social Council since 2003.

Jean-Pierre Thystére-Tchicaya: A senior PCT member in the 1970s and early 1980s, when he was incarcerated by Sassou Nguesso. Pointe-Noire's favorite son, he founded the *Rassemblement pour la Démocratie et le Progrés Social* in 1990. After accepting an electoral alliance with Sassou Nguesso shortly after he reclaimed power in 1997, Thystére-Tchicaya lost much of the public credibility he had acquired. Elected to the National Assembly in 2002 and 2007, he died in 2008.

Jacques Joachim Yhombi-Opango: President of Congo between 1977 and 1979, when he was removed by Sassou Nguesso. An Owando native, he founded the *Rassemblement pour la Démocratie*

et le Développement (RDD) in 1990. In exile between October 1997 and August 2007, he accepted an electoral alliance with Sassou Nguesso prior to the 2009 presidential election.

Part I

The Modern Prince

1

Autocrats, Institutions, and the Third Wave of Democracy

Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains. One man thinks himself the master of others, but still remains a greater slave than they.

– Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*

The Third Wave of democracy reached Africa in January 1989, when throngs of Benin students protested the government's failure to disburse scholarships. Five years later, with the Cold War over and food prices soaring, nearly all of Africa's autocrats bowed to popular demands for reform.[1] Some fell, others survived. But virtually all were subjected to nominally democratic political institutions: executive term limits, independent legislatures, and regular elections contested by a range of political parties.

African politics since has been a contest between aspiring autocrats and these democratic institutions. In some countries – Ghana, Kenya, Senegal, and South Africa, most notably – the democratic institutions won. Elections grew more competitive, losers were forced to respect the will of voters, and equitable economic growth produced a middle class. But elsewhere – places like Angola, Cameroon, Chad, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon – elections remain a sham, and ruling families grow wealthy while their citizens remain the world's poorest. There are, increasingly, two Africas: one democratic, the other autocratic. Scholars know much less about the latter.

Virtually all African autocrats now govern with parliaments and organize regular, multiparty elections. They have little choice. Since the end of the Cold War, Western governments have required nominally democratic institutions in exchange for economic aid, investment, and debt relief. In an era of YouTube and smartphones, moreover, violent repression is impossible to conceal from the international community. Life as an autocrat has thus grown more perilous. Like their Cold War era predecessors, Africa's autocrats must protect themselves from elite conspiracies. The *coup d'état*, after all, is deceptively simple to execute: conspirators need only to seize the media apparatus, airport, and a handful of governing institutions in the capital [116, 87]. But Africa's aspiring autocrats must also ensure that latent popular frustration does not coalesce into mass revolt. For the international community's insistence on regular elections – however fraudulent – creates "focal moments,"

[1] According to Bratton and van de Walle [36], 40 of Africa's 42 autocracies had liberalized their political systems.

when citizens most easily act collectively for change. During election seasons citizens are more engaged in the political process and more aware of their neighbors' discontent. Opposition leaders, who wager that international attention will shield them from domestic repression, stand ready to mobilize frustrated citizens. These focal moments are so powerful that Africa's autocrats are now more often removed by election related events than *coups d'état*, as illustrated in Figure 1.4.

Table 1.1 illustrates the perils of nominally democratic institutions for Africa's autocrats. It presents the results of a Cox proportional hazard model, which estimates the probability that and autocrat falls in a given year as a function of prevailing political institutions, executive and legislative elections, and a range of control variables. During the Cold War, Model 1 suggests, autocrats who governed with single parties were 52% less likely to lose power in a given year than autocrats who outlawed political competition. Nominally democratic institutions – indeed, elections themselves – had virtually no effect on autocratic survival. But since the end of the Cold War – when Africa's surviving autocrats were forced to abide nominally democratic institutions by Western creditors – these institutions have consistently toppled Africa's autocrats. In executive election years, Africa's autocrats are nearly 170% more likely to lose power than usual. When African citizens are permitted to vote for national parliaments, Africa's autocrats are nearly 70% more likely to lose power. Accordingly, between 1986 and 2000, the number of autocracies in Africa fell from 45 to 30.

But Africa's autocrats are learning to survive despite democratic institutions. The pace of democratization has slowed to a trickle, as Figures 1.1 through 1.3 reflect. With it, Africa's surviving autocrats have secured their place among the global super rich, earning the attention of French courts in the process. As part of their ongoing corruption investigation – known as the *biens mal acquis* affair – French investigators recently seized a handful of Paris mansions belonging to the ruling families of Equatorial Guinea and the Republic of Congo, with Gabon's to be targeted next. One, belonging to the Equato-Guinean president's son, was valued at $180 million; it includes 101 rooms, a Turkish bath, a hair salon, two gym clubs, a nightclub, and a movie theater. In 2010 Ali Bongo Ondimba,

Table 1.1: Determinants of Autocratic Survival

	Model 1 Africa 1960-1988	Model 2 Africa 1989-2008	Model 3 Global 1960-2008	Model 4 Global 1960-1988	Model 5 Global 1989-2008
Single Party Regime	-0.73317*	0.3745	-0.271208†	-0.72635**	1.02674**
	(0.34043)	(0.5384)	(0.167719)	(0.20117)	(0.35646)
Nominally Democratic Institutions	-0.25549	-0.1083	-0.003974	-0.23587††	0.62728*
	(0.41002)	(0.4882)	(0.146702)	(0.18520)	(0.30977)
Military Dictatorship	1.00747*	0.1176	0.382876*	0.54304**	-0.34603
	(0.44872)	(0.5198)	(0.150856)	(0.18371)	(0.30699)
Entered by Coup	-1.02010*	0.3832	-0.095656	-0.38132†	0.56972†
	(0.43715)	(0.5440)	(0.160810)	(0.19645)	(0.31238)
Legislative Elections	0.41419	0.5060††	0.365278*	0.62308**	0.09856
	(0.36375)	(0.3889)	(0.148044)	(0.18798)	(0.25239)
Executive Elections	-0.18476	0.9781*	0.560477**	0.33427††	0.76181**
	(0.47334)	(0.3890)	(0.167037)	(0.22969)	(0.25589)
ln Real GDP	0.01050	-0.2015††	0.009948	0.05712††	-0.05603
	(0.08849)	(0.1461)	(0.034023)	(0.04238)	(0.06125)
N	1012	512	3337	2244	1093

Significance levels: $\dagger\dagger$: 20% $\dagger$: 10% $*$: 5% $**$: 1%

	Change in probability of losing power in year t Baseline: Autocrats who proscribe political competition				
Single Party Regime	-0.52			-0.52	1.79
Nominally Democratic Institutions				-0.21	0.87
Legislative Elections		0.66	0.44	0.86	
Executive Elections		1.66	0.75	0.40	1.14

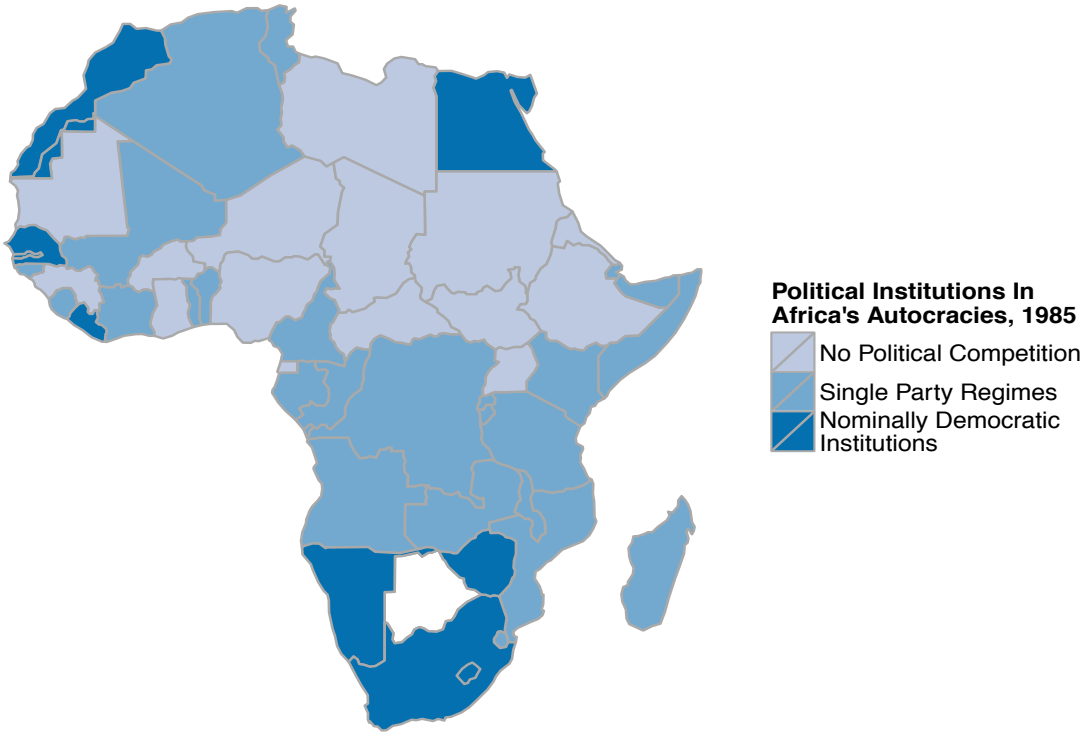

Figure 1.1: Africa's autocracies in 1985, prior to the Third Wave of Democracy. Autocrats ruled virtually the entire continent, mostly by outlawing political competition or maintaining single party regimes. Africa's sole democracy, Botswana, appears in white.

president of Gabon and son of the late Omar Bongo Ondimba, purchased a 48,000 square foot mansion in Paris's seventh *arrondissement*, a block from the River Seine, for $142 million. One of

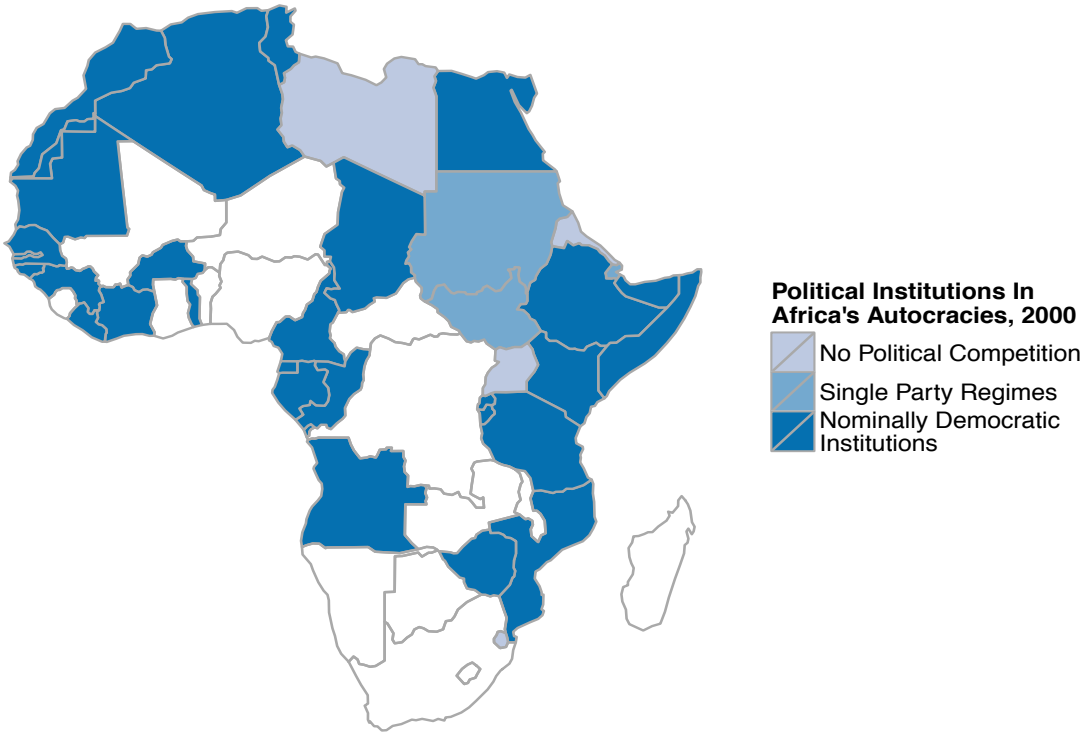

Figure 1.2: Africa's autocracies in 2000, immediately after the Third Wave of Democracy. Virtually all surviving autocrats ruled with nominally democratic institutions. Democracies appear in white.

nearly 40 properties the family owns in France, the mansion includes a heated swimming pool, jacuzzi, seven parking spaces, and a tennis court. The fortunes of Africa's autocrats are difficult

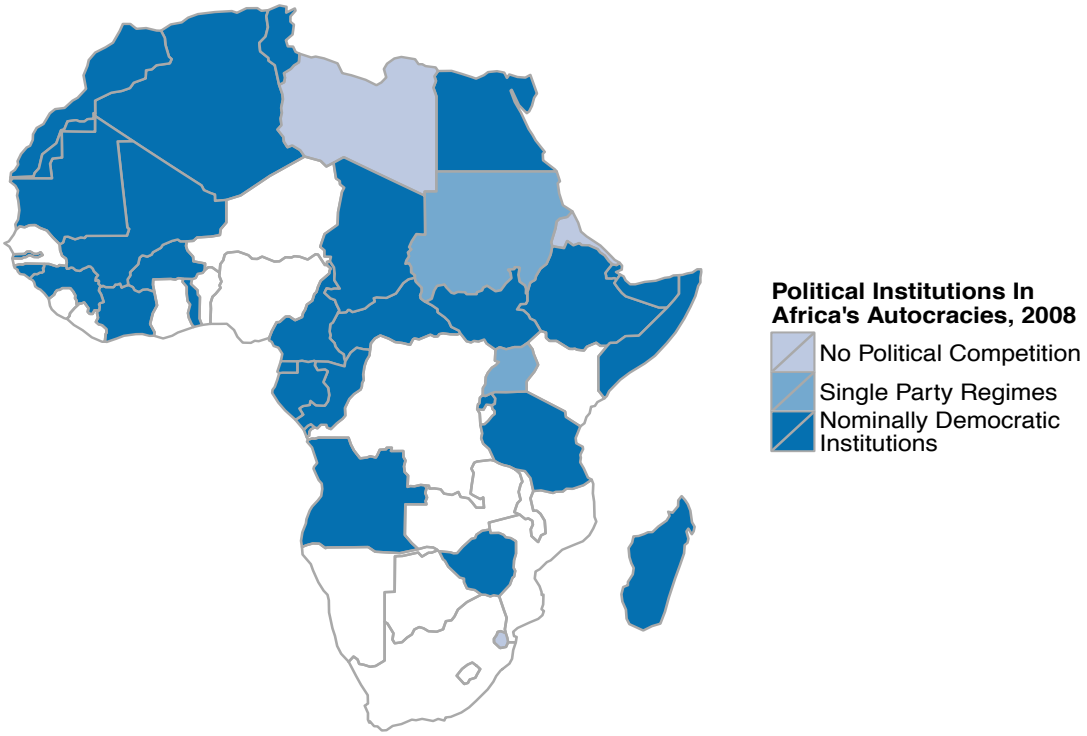

Figure 1.3: Africa's autocracies in 2008, nearly two decades after the Third Wave. The pace of democratization slowed to a trickle as Africa's autocrats learned to survive despite nominally democratic institutions. Democracies appear in white.

to ascertain. But recent estimates suggest their personal fortunes reach into the billions of dollars.

Africa's richest woman is now Isabel dos Santos, daughter of José Eduardo dos Santos, Angola's pres-

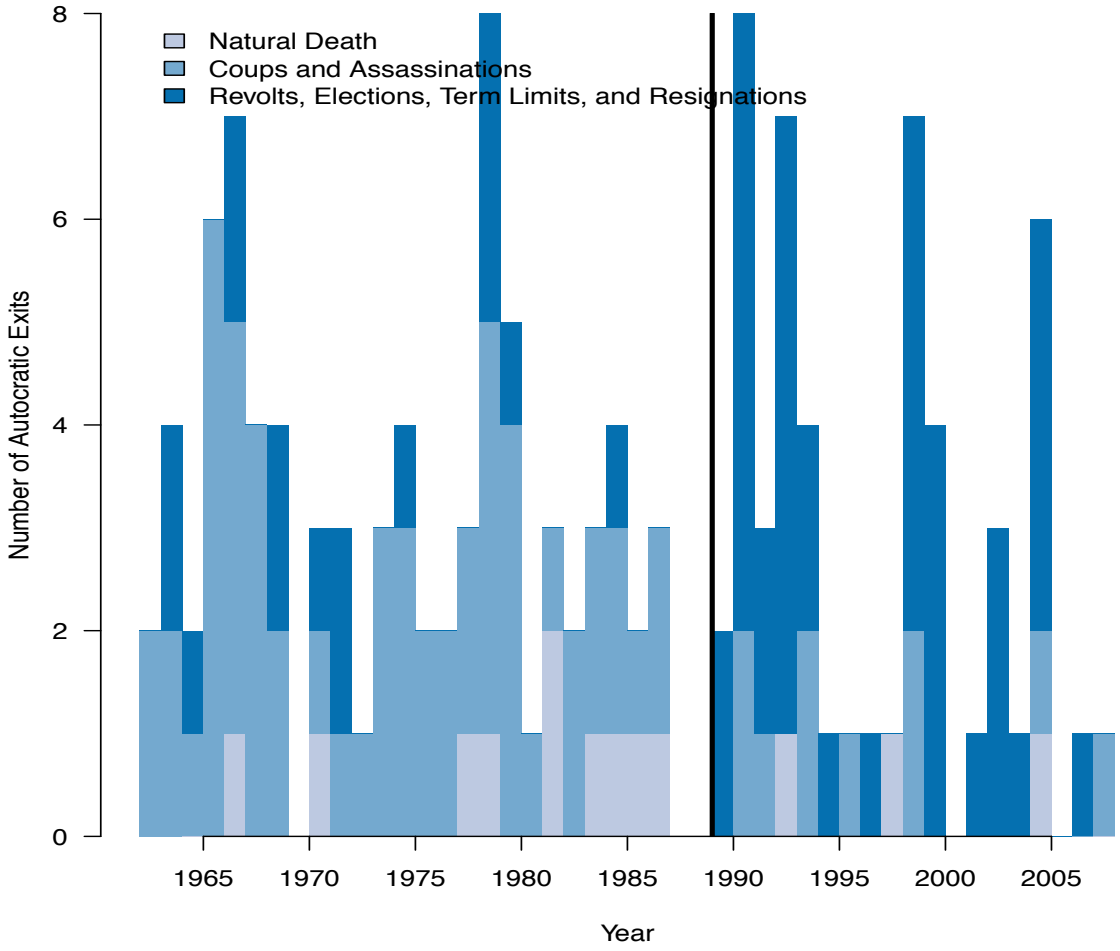

Figure 1.4: How Africa's autocrats lose power, by year. The black line at 1989 records the end of the Cold War and the onset of the Third Wave of Democracy.

ident since 1979. Isabel amassed a $3 billion fortune between 2000 and 2013, making her Africa's only female billionaire, and its youngest. Wrote Forbes:

> Every major Angolan investment held by Dos Santos stems either from taking a chunk of a company that wants to do business in the country or from a stroke of the president's pen that cut her into the action [58].

These dynamics occurred around the world, as Figures 1.8 through 1.10 illustrate. The single best predictor of whether an autocrat governs with nominally democratic institutions is not the kind of dictatorship he operates or his country's gross domestic product. Rather, the best predictor is simply whether he ruled after the Berlin Wall fell. As in Africa, autocrats elsewhere have fought nominally democratic institutions tenaciously. For while most elections can be won with fraud, nominally democratic institutions still render life as an autocrat more perilous. During the Cold War, when the Soviet Union and United States struggled over the world's political institutions, Table 1.1 reveals that autocrats who governed with single parties were some 52% less likely to fall in a given year than autocrats who outlawed political competition altogether. Moreover, reflecting American support, autocrats who governed with nominally democratic institutions were 21% less likely to fall in a given year. Yet since the Cold War ended, autocrats with single parties have been nearly 180% more likely to fall in a given year, and autocrats with nominally democratic institutions nearly 90%.[2]

This perspective challenges the conventional wisdom among social scientists. Scholars increasingly locate the origins of autocratic durability in nominally democratic institutions [115, 117, 118, 68, 29, 72, 73, 176] or single parties [37, 71, 166]. These institutions, the arguments generally go, foster credible commitments between autocrats and regime insiders, placate domestic opposition, or allocate patronage in a way that allies regard as fair. But as the results above make clear, these contributions are less useful for understanding autocracy in the 21st century. The world's autocrats have less control over their domestic political institutions than ever before. Since the Third Wave – when the international community began insisting on democratic institutions in exchange for aid – autocrats have neither had access to single parties nor welcomed multiparty legislatures.

How, then, do contemporary African autocrats survive democratic institutions?

[2] See Dobson [57] and Owen [141] for similar observations in the Middle East, Latin American, and Soviet successor states.

1.1 The Argument

Autocrats confront common challenges. They must recruit for the regime's most sensitive positions – leading ministers, senior military officers, and parastatal directors – knowing that these appointments determine which elites threaten them from within and mobilize popular frustration from without. Once these positions are filled, autocrats must monitor their occupants. For when parastatal directors siphon revenue, autocrats possess less wealth for patronage and personal consumption. Senior military officers, who have access to arms and their subordinates' loyalties, may simply decide to seize power for themselves or, when unprepared, prove unable to suppress popular uprisings. Later, autocrats must decide whether appointees will be arbitrarily purged, or whether to consistently reward competence with tenure security. Outside the governing coalition, autocrats must ensure that those excluded from the regime do not revolt against it.

The 20th century's most iconic autocrats induced loyalty with fear [142] and relied on single parties to "bind together otherwise fractious coalitions" [37]. Buttressed by the Soviet Union, they were far more durable than their counterparts. But 21st century autocrats confront new constraints. They must abide nominally democratic institutions, which render single party regimes inaccessible for all but the most financially secure.[3] With the international community less tolerant of violence, autocrats must increasingly forgo mortal fear as a political instrument. And with information more accessible than ever before, impoverished Africans are more aware of their leaders' venality.

To secure the loyalties of their elite, Africa's autocrats increasingly wield social tools. Whereas single party membership rosters once defined the pool of candidates for the regime's most sensitive positions, Africa's autocrats increasingly restrict their candidate pools based on social characteristics. This creates a "politics of hope," which induces compliance even when elites are excluded from the regime. To monitor appointees, Africa's contemporary autocrats create social institutions, in

[3] China, Malaysia, and Singapore are the clearest examples.

which new recruits interact with the autocrat's most trusted aides. Autocrats supplement these with parallel governments, which generate competition for their favor. Akin to tournaments, these parallel governments generate competition only when paired elites are unable to collude; hence Africa's autocrats pair elites who are separated by ethnic cleavages or family rivalries. When Africa's autocrats deploy these monitoring devices effectively, they forgo arbitrary purges in favor of predictable tenure policies, which reward competence with reappointment. Notwithstanding the mortal stakes of politics, Africa's modern autocrats resemble nothing so much as the CEOs of Fortune 500 companies. Personal rule, this dissertation argues, is rational rather than idiosyncratic.

If modern African autocrats are as concerned about elite conspiracies as their predecessors, they are far more concerned about popular uprisings. The international community's insistence on regular elections – however fraudulent – creates "focal moments," when citizens are more engaged in the political process and more aware of their shared discontent. Opposition leaders increasingly wager that international attention – compounded by the prevalence of YouTube and smartphones – will shield them from domestic repression. And because they stand to gain most if an autocrat is removed – and stand at the center of broad social networks – they are uniquely capable of mobilizing frustrated citizens. In contemporary Africa, there is a very real sense that, once citizens flood the streets, autocrats have already lost.[4] This new institutional landscape imposes new challenges. Autocrats must decide whether to create electoral alliances with opposition parties. They must also decide how to organize electoral competition among regime lieutenants. And with violent repression less credible than ever, autocrats must also construct their internal security apparatuses in ways that render violence at least somewhat credible, while not provoking local populations.

These are the techniques of autocratic survival in contemporary Africa, designed to overcome new challenges and satisfy new constraints. These techniques are operationalized differently across the continent. For autocrats confront different strategic environments, and they respond accord-

[4] Dobson [57] finds this sentiment in contemporary China as well.

ingly. This dissertation argues that the ways these techniques are operationalized is correlated. Building on [176], the dissertation suggests two equilibria of autocratic politics. In the "contested" equilibrium, the ratio of an autocrat's resources to his elite is relatively small. The autocrat recruits an extremely narrow elite and shuffles them frequently; his hold on power is weak and he oversees a less efficient state apparatus. Parliamentary elections are blatantly fraudulent and opposition parties, despite the autocrat's attempts at suppression, actively conspire with the support of frustrated citizens. In the "established" equilibrium, an autocrat is rich relative to his elite, enabling him to spend more freely. He can create common knowledge among elites about their privileged economic welfare, rendering conspiracies unlikely. He can provide a wage premium to appointees, which induces loyalty from those outside the regime by creating a "politics of hope." He can afford to duplicate government portfolios, fostering elite competition and compliance. These two accountability devices enable the autocrat to forgo elite shuffling for more predictable tenure policies, thus rewarding competence with reappointment. More secure, the autocrat can force alliances with the opposition – which undermines their credibility – and force local barons to mobilize their constituents on his behalf. With little chance of unseating him, young men from once hostile areas have little choice but to join the internal security apparatus, policing their neighbors and reporting on their anti-regime activities.

With political institutions fixed and recourse to violence circumscribed, this dissertation's broadest argument is that 21st century autocrats are powerful when their citizens *believe* so. Autocratic survival requires manipulating the beliefs of one's opponents. Financial resources are critical. They enable autocrats to reward loyalty, assign multiple elites similar responsibilities, and lure opposition leaders into alliances that diminish their public credibility. But security begets security. When opposition leaders *believe* their only path to power is partnering with the autocrat, their support becomes cheaper to purchase. When prominent regional politicians *believe* the autocrat's blessing is more useful for career advancement than popular support, autocrats commission electoral competition

to create a veneer of popular support. When young men who would otherwise take up arms against the regime *believe* doing so is futile, they police their hostile native region on the regime's behalf. When citizens *believe* the autocrat's threats of violence are credible, they acquiesce. In identifying these connections, the dissertation characterizes the "contested" and "established" equilibria of autocratic politics in the presence of nominally democratic institutions. It explains when they emerge, and how transitions between them occur.

1.2 The Research Design

Although the most common form of government in human history, autocratic rule has proven difficult to document and theorize. For fieldwork in autocracies is difficult, at best, and potentially very dangerous. Scholars have thus sought to understand autocratic politics by focusing on those features observable from afar: the rare *coup d'état*, the even rarer popular uprising, the occasional purges and shuffles, the presence or absence of parliaments and single parties, and the reports of violence that periodically appear in international news reports. These events can be "coded" as one variable among many in cross-country datasets. Moreover, the focus on institutions as sources of "credible commitment" fits neatly into theoretical models developed by students of democratic politics [2, 149, 32].

Understanding modern autocracy requires a different approach. With political institutions fixed and the instruments of survival increasingly social, students of autocratic politics must know more about their subjects than ever before. To understand the criteria according to which autocrats construct their coalitions, we must know the elites who went unappointed. To understand how autocrats foment intraelite competition, we must understand the cleavages that separate paired appointees. To understand compulsory elite social institutions, we must know which elites are members, how they were selected, and how their behavior diverges from non-members. To understand

whether elites are purged arbitrarily or removed for cause, we must know which elites engaged in anti-regime behavior. To understand how and why autocrats forge electoral alliances with opposition parties, we must know the backgrounds of opposition leaders and their subsequent political fates. In short, to build general models of contemporary autocratic politics, we must know the *names* of our subjects, understand their biographies, and record their behavior. Autocratic politics is personal; it occurs among individuals. The unit of analysis must be the people who comprise the regime, the excluded elites who hope to join or depose it, and the frustrated citizens who struggle against it.

These considerations favor a microempirical research design. This dissertation focuses on a single country: the Republic of Congo, ruled by President Denis Sassou Nguesso. After orchestrating President Marien Ngouabi's assassination in 1977 – as Ngouabi's Defense Minister – Sassou Nguesso claimed power in a *coup d'état* in 1979. For the next 12 years Sassou Nguesso presided over an ostensibly Marxist regime that proscribed all political parties save the ruling *Parti Congolais du Travail* (PCT), the Congolese Labor Party. He did so, indeed, while receiving roughly $0.40 of each barrel of Congolese crude oil sold to France in exchange for setting Congo's royalties per barrel at 17%, rather than the usual 33% [104, 77, 162]. Even though it was pumping $2 million of crude oil each day, by 1991 the government was unable to pay its civil servants. Like so many autocrats, Sassou Nguesso got swept up in the Third Wave of Democracy. After declaring itself sovereign, the National Conference of 1991 organized the country's first democratic presidential elections in 1992, which Sassou Nguesso lost with 17% of the vote, earning him the sobriquet *Monsieur 17%*. He decamped to Paris shortly thereafter. With the tacit approval of French President Jacques Chirac and Angolan military support, Sassou Nguesso provoked and won the 1997 civil war [181, 182, 183]. He has ruled since.

1.2.1 The Republic of Congo

Although often neglected in favor of its much larger eastern neighbor – the Democratic Republic of Congo, colonized by Belgium and governed from Kinshasa – Congo's history is no less tragic. Congo is nearly as poor now as it was in 1962, when it claimed independence from France. Somewhere between 50% and 60% of Congolese citizens subsist on less than $1 each day. In 2004 the government's per capita debt was the highest in the world; the International Monetary Fund (IMF) put it at $6.4 billion, over twice the country's annual GDP [77]. In 2003 a global survey rated Brazzaville the world's worst city in which to live, below even Baghdad [76]. The Congolese civil wars of the late 1990s were particularly gruesome. Fought over Brazzaville itself, the war displaced some 800, 000 citizens and killed another 30, 000 [192, 131]. This number may pale in comparison to the civil war in neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo. But as a percentage of Congo's population, it was staggering. With only 3 million inhabitants, Congo lost 1% of its population. The country has yet to fully recover from the infrastructural damage.

Congo is also strikingly rich, as Figure 1.5 makes clear. Although the government tightly guards oil revenue, the country is now among Africa's leading oil producers [77]. Congo's output has expanded steadily since 1980, with daily oil production now worth nearly $17 million, or some $6 billion annually. Just how much Sassou Nguesso embezzles is difficult to ascertain. But extant estimates suggest the figure is at least $250 million annually [77]. The scale of Sassou Nguesso's wealth in Paris alone is staggering. In 2006 Sassou Nguesso's family owned 21 homes in Paris and environs; it rented at least three others; and the family sold at least two other homes prior to 2004. This number excludes the properties owned by Edith Sassou Nguesso's two children with Omar Bongo, the late Gabonese president. Both born in the early 1990s, these two children own five homes between them. Of these 31 total residences, we have financial data for six. The crown jewel is 4 Rue de la Baume, in the eighth *arrondissement* of Paris, only a half mile from the French president's res-

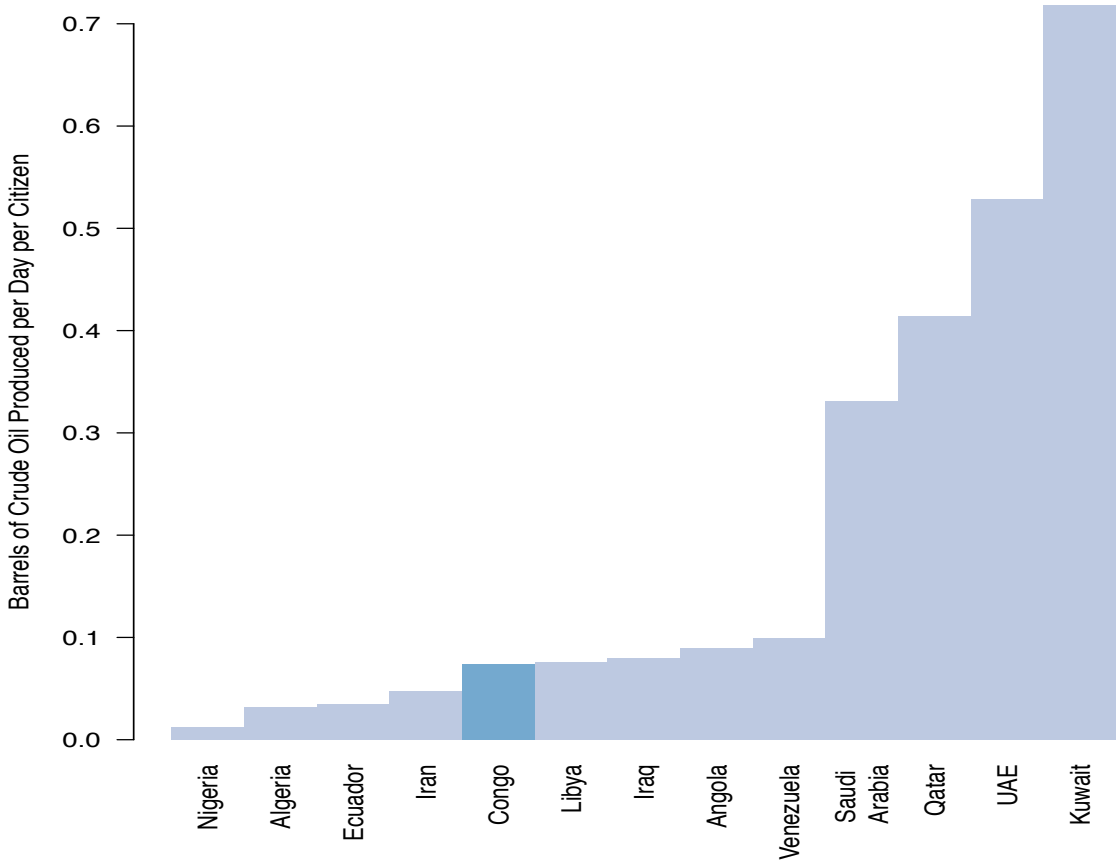

Figure 1.5: Oil production per capita in Congo and the OPEC countries.

idence and the famed Champs Élysées; in 2006 it was valued at $26 million. The most recent acquisition appears to be Edgard Nguesso's, a nephew. He rents a luxury suite at *La Réserve Paris* for over $16, 000 per night; located in the affluent 16th *arrondissement*, the apartment features spectacular views of the Eiffel Tower, an in-house chef, valet service, day governess, and custom library. In 2006 Edgard owned two other homes in Paris. The Sassou Nguesso family also registered at least 10 luxury vehicles in France: two BMWs, three Mercedes, one Porsche, one Aston Martin, one Audi, and two sport utility vehicles. We have financial data for eight of them; their total value in 2006 was

nearly $1.2 million. The family has at least 110 accounts in Parisian banks.[5]

Figure 1.6: Sassou Nguesso's real estate holdings in central Paris.

Wealth begets wealth. So as oil revenue expanded, Sassou Nguesso diversified his investment portfolio. The Congolese aviation industry is now dominated by Sassou Nguesso's family and allies. Of the 15 registered aviation companies, the four most important are controlled by Sassou Nguesso

[5]Evidence for these purchases was provided to me by a confidential source in Paris, France, in January 2011. I intend to release the documents on my personal website once the dissertation is published.

surrogates.[6] Unsurprisingly, this virtual monopoly on the country's aviation sector has horrible effects for consumers. Tickets remain prohibitively expensive and security records are so poor that none of the country's operators are permitted to fly in European Union airspace.[7] Sassou Nguesso equally dominates the country's shipping industries. *Société Congolaise de Transports Maritimes* (SOCOTRAM) was founded in 1990 as a national shipping company, which collected 40% of the country's shipping taxes on imports and exports. Ownership was divided. The Congolese state owned a 45% stake, while a French businessman – and close friend of Sassou Nguesso – owned 55%. Upon his 1997 return to power, Sassou Nguesso affirmed the company's right to 40% of "shipping taxes" on all goods shipped in Congolese waters. SOCOTRAM also benefited from a new majority shareholder: Shipping and Trading, a Liechtenstein based firm owned by nephew César Wilfried Nguesso.

This conspicuous wealth attracted the world's attention. *The Sunday Times*, a British broadsheet owned by Rupert Murdoch, reported on Sassou Nguesso's five-day visit to the United Nations General Assembly in September 2006. His room alone ordered nearly $25,000 of room service at the Waldorf Astoria; his full entourage occupied 44 rooms and managed a bill of $215,000, "comfortably more than the [$175,000] that Britain gave the Republic of Congo in humanitarian aid in 2006."[8] With Omar Bongo, ruler of Gabon from 1967 until his death in 2009, and Teodoro Obiang Nguema, president of Equatorial Guinea since he publicly murdered the former president – also his uncle – in 1979, Sassou Nguesso is under investigation by French authorities for embezzlement. Son Denis Christel's shopping sprees are legendary. In 2007 Global Witness, a British NGO, revealed that in 2005 alone Denis Christel spent more than $185,000 at designer boutiques in Paris and Dubai[79]. Denis Christel occupies three Paris apartments. The scale of this wealth is typical

[6] Société Nouvelle Air Congo is owned by a member of the Sassou Nguesso family; Trans Air Congo is owned by Isidore Mvouba; Equajet is owned by Edgard Nguesso and Jean Jacques Bouya; Air Congo Express is owned by Maurice Nguesso.

[7] *La Lettre du Continent* 603.

[8] Quoted from `http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denis-Sassou Nguesso` on 11 December 2010.

in autocracies. During his 42 years in power, for instance, Bongo accumulated some 39 properties in France, mostly in Passy, the most exclusive Paris neighborhood.

Congo's infrastructure – its transportation system, electricity grid, educational sector, and health care – remain among the world's worst. Sassou Nguesso's government has never constructed a primary school; life expectancy is just over 50 years; and only 32% of the rural population has access to clean drinking water [131]. The construction projects launched recently by Sassou Nguesso's government are thus strikingly superfluous. The country benefits from a new international airport, its third and by far highest quality. The airport is located in Ollombo, some five miles south of Oyo,[9] Sassou Nguesso's home village in the northern Cuvette region. Oyo's population is but 10, 000; Congo's population is concentrated in the south. Oyo benefits too from a new, ultramodern hospital. The hospital's specialities: prostate cancer and epilepsy, both of which are said to afflict members of the Sassou Nguesso family. The hospital is reported to cost nearly $40 million.[10] Oyo also boasts a new hotel, the Alima Palace. It features five floors, 118 rooms, 10 luxury suites, six presidential suites, a grand piano in the lobby, high definition TVs in each room, an oval shaped pool, two tennis courts, and, soon, an 18 hole golf course. The hotel's standard rooms will cost 400 per night.[11] Guests will apparently be restricted to presidential delegations, for the area boasts no tourist attractions. Indeed, Congo's few foreign visitors are discouraged from even traveling to Oyo, and occasionally even incarcerated for doing so [99].

1.2.2 The Two Africas

Africa's "rise" is so widely accepted that both *Time Magazine* and *The Economist* have proclaimed it. In reality, however, there are two Africas: one autocratic, the other democratic. Figure 1.7 displays the number of newly elected African presidents, per country, since the Third Wave began in

[9] Inaugurated in 2007, started in 2001, at a cost of 58 milliards cfa.
[10] Interview with Patrick Eric Mampouya, ??
[11] Interview with Chinese workers, 8 April 2012.

1989. As African optimists observe, broad swathes of the continent are genuinely democratic. Some 17 African "success stories" have elected two or more new presidents since 1989. Incumbent presidents accepted constitutional term limits, and losing candidates respected the will of voters. But in 15 other African countries rulers have maintained such a firm grip on power that their compatriots have yet to elect a new president since 1989. In several of these countries – Angola, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, and Eritrea, most notably – citizens have *never* participated in genuinely democratic presidential elections. In 11 more countries – Congo among them– voters have elected but one new president, often with disastrous results.

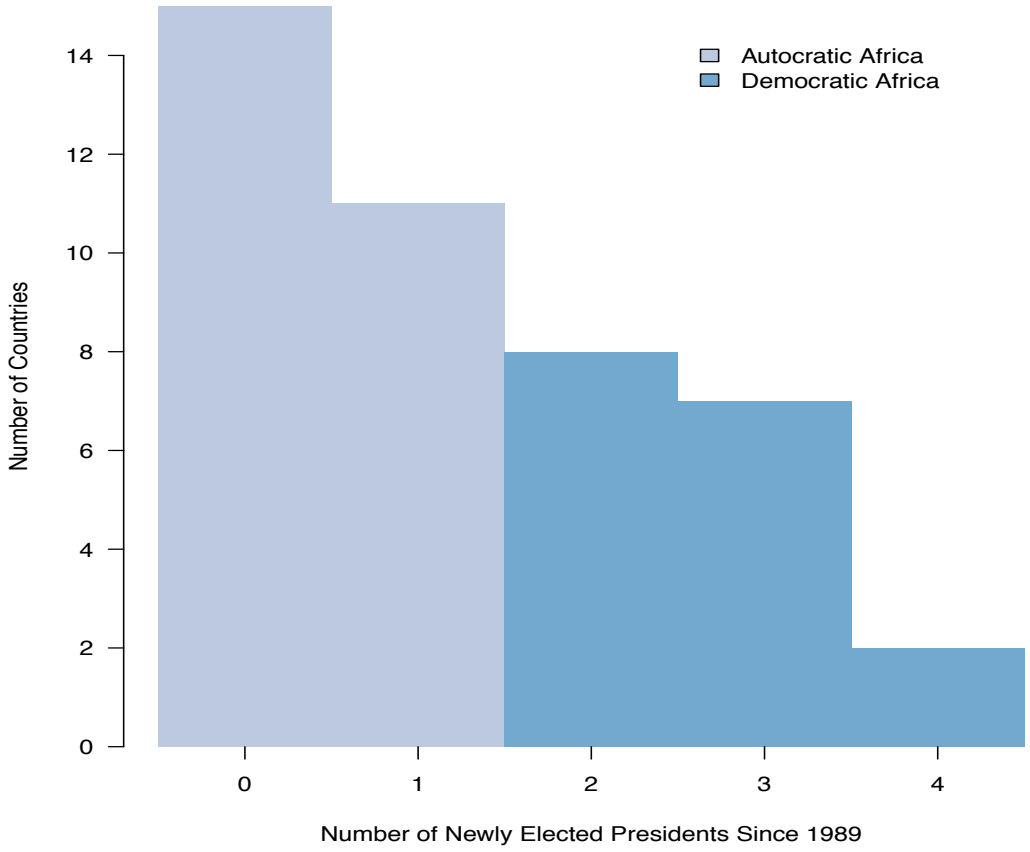

Figure 1.7: The number of newly elected presidents, by country, since 1989.

Table 1.2 illustrates the divide between the two Africas. Column 1 reports Congo's performance on a range of economic and political indicators; column 2 reports the performance of autocratic Africa for the same indicators; and column 3 does so for democratic Africa. In autocratic Africa citizens last elected a new president nearly 35 years ago; in democratic Africa, roughly five years ago. Citizens of autocratic Africa have suffered more civil wars and enjoy fewer civil liberties, and their governments assemble much larger militaries to secure power. Governments in autocratic Africa are far more corrupt and oversee economies that are far less friendly to foreign and domestic investors. They also attract – and their citizens benefit from – far less foreign aid than in democratic Africa.

Autocratic Africa is more affluent than democratic Africa. Yet this is almost entirely driven by its greater natural resource wealth. Indeed, while foreign direct investment in democratic Africa continues to rise, economic growth in autocratic Africa is driven largely by off-shore oil production. Consequently, whatever wealth autocratic Africa enjoys is distributed far less equally than in democratic Africa. In autocratic Africa, the top 10% of the population controls nearly 40% of their countries' wealth; in democratic Africa, the top 10% controls closer to 30% of wealth.

Rulers in autocratic Africa are far less accountable to their citizens, far more likely to resort to violence to retain power, and control much larger shares of their countries' wealth. Unsurprisingly, they also provide drastically fewer public goods. Although cities across Africa now have access to clean drinking water, residents of rural autocratic Africa remain terribly underserved, and especially in Congo, where only 32% of rural citizens enjoy clean drinking water. Democratic Africa enjoys five times the number of community health workers per citizen than autocratic Africa, and their governments spend nearly 1% more of their GDP on public health. Roads are critical for subsistence farmers to market their produce, and democratic Africa, accordingly, has invested in a road network three times larger than in autocratic Africa. Citizens in democratic Africa consume twice as much electricity as in autocratic Africa and receive almost twice as much credit from the domestic banking sector. Their governments spend more on public education per student across the board: at the

Table 1.2: Congo, Autocratic Africa, and Democratic Africa. The data are drawn from primarily from World Bank and IMF statistics.

	Congo	Autocratic Africa	Democratic Africa
Political Indicators			
Years Since Last Newly Elected President	22	33.23	4.53
Newly Elected Presidents Since 1989	1	0.42	2.65
Armed Forces (percent labor force)	0.71%	1.11%	0.39%
Mean Political Instability Since 2000 (0, 1)	0.36	0.29	0.16
Freedom House Civil Liberties (0, 6)	2	1.88	3.76
Former French Colony	1	0.42	0.24
Governance Indicators			
Corruption Index (−2.5, 2.5)	−1.14	−0.81	−0.48
Regulatory Environment (−2.5, 2.5)	−1.28	−0.94	−0.45
Economic Growth			
GDP Per Capita, 2010	2,159.02	2,304.74	1,483.16
Crude Oil Production (per day per citizen)	0.07	0.03	0.00
Foreign Direct Investment, 2010 (in millions)	$2,638.41	$26.39	$1,030.98
Foreign Aid (percent GNI)	2.29%	8.63%	20.60%
Income Distribution			
Gini Coefficient, 2010	47.32	47.8	40.925
Income Share of Top 10%	37.05%	37.4%	32.03%
Public Good Provision			
Clean Drinking Water, Rural (percent population)	32%	51.96%	60.12%
Clean Drinking Water, Urban (percent population)	95%	84.22%	88.82%
Community Health Workers (per 1,000 people)	0.03	0.09	0.52
Public Health Expenditure (percent GDP)	1.60%	2.75%	3.49%
Domestic Credit to Private Sector (percent GDP)	5.46%	15.89%	26.60%
Road Density (km road per 100sq km land	5	4.5	15.6
Gross Fixed Capital Formation	$673.33	$3,737.85	$9,652.63
Electric Power Consumption (kWh per capita)	146.39	431.79	841.82
Primary Education Expenditure (per student, percent GDPpc)	11.06%	12.42%	15.37%
Secondary Education Expenditure (per student, percent GDPpc)	16.401%	26.18%	34.04%
Tertiary Education Expenditure (per student, percent GDPpc)	134.15%	141.89%	680.95%
Livelihood Outcomes			
Household Consumption Expenditure (in millions)	$4,840.32	$14,804.34	$48,752.49

primary level, secondary level, and, especially, at the tertiary level. That Africa's autocrats spend so little on public education – especially at the highest levels – is unsurprising. For little good comes from a literate, informed population.

Sassou Nguesso's Congo is emblematic of autocratic Africa. It has been some 22 years since Congolese citizens were given the right to elect a president, and in the meantime their lives have been wracked by civil war. Despite their country's oil wealth, Congolese citizens live in nearly unrivaled poverty, and their government does little to alleviate it.

1.2.3 Data Collection

To understand political survival in autocratic Africa, I spent nearly two years in Congo. I first arrived on Tuesday, July 7, 2009. Congolese citizens went to the polls five days later, on July 12, to elect their president for only the fourth time in the country's 49 years of independence. No one expected a fair election, as turnout ultimately reflected. Although the government announced a participation rate of 66.42%, opposition leaders and the diplomatic community estimated it at less than 10%.[12]

I was to cover the presidential elections with reporters from *La Semaine Africaine*, the country's longest standing independent newspaper. These plans were quickly derailed. Suspected of being a CIA agent – Who, after all, visits Congo voluntarily? – I was detained for 36 hours at Brazzaville's Maya Maya airport, a crumbling colonial era facility that was ravaged during the civil wars. This 36 hours, in fact, represented a personal victory. For Colonel Ndinga, responsible for airport security, initially ordered a three day detention; I arrived on Ethiopian Airlines and on Ethiopian Airlines I would leave, never mind that the next departure was three days hence. Eight of my 36 hours of detention, of course, were at night, when the military presence both increased and relaxed. I befriended the soldiers, all subordinates of Colonel Ndinga, who were detaining me. We shared several rounds of beer, they gave me a mattress on which to sleep and a Sassou Nguesso reelection shirt,

[12] Interview with Chris McHone, 15 August 2009.

and promised to shuttle me through immigration when I returned to Brazzaville after the elections. They also expedited my departure. I gave Kevin, a young Congolese man, $1, 000 to purchase a roundtrip airfare to South Africa. Kevin returned a few hours later with the ticket and about $13 change. While I waited in South Africa, my newfound friends persuaded Colonel Ndinga I wasn't a spy. Several weeks later, just before my September departure, one of my military friends gave me Colonel Ndinga's private cell phone number; I called him, we chatted for 30 minutes, and he invited me for supper at his home.

I returned to Congo as often as possible during the subsequent five years. I befriended Congolese citizens from across the political spectrum: generals, colonels, ministers, their counselors, regional administrators, opposition leaders, journalists, church officials, human rights activists, regular citizens, members of the foreign diplomatic corps, and even members of the Sassou Nguesso family. Many came to trust me. Others never did, for among the legacies of Marxism and political violence is pervasive distrust, especially for those who wish to discuss politics. Citizens spoke to me for a range of reasons. Many did so to ensure their suffering would not be lost to history. Others did so because they viewed it as the only way to affect political change. If Western governments knew of Sassou Nguesso's crimes, they reasoned, perhaps those governments would do something about it. Still others hoped I could help them engineer an Arab Spring in Central Africa. Government officials usually sought to absolve the regime of its crimes or to vindicate their participation. Befitting the political environment, many incurred significant personal risk, which the anonymity I obviously granted did little to moderate. Some would speak candidly only in Paris, far from the regime's surveillance apparatus. I traveled there on several occasions.

To supplement these interviews, I spent countless hours at the archives of Brazzaville's three primary newspapers. *La Semaine Africaine* remains Central Africa's oldest newspaper, first published as a Catholic magazine in the 1950s. It survived the Marxist period, the civil wars of the 1990s, and the recent move towards self-censorship. Its exceptional archives are indispensable for students

of Congo. Founded in the early 2000s, *Talassa* is Congo's leading opposition newspaper. Sassou Nguesso's euphemistically named *Conseil Supérieur de la Liberté de Communication* (CSLC) – the High Council for Freedom of Communication – routinely incarcerates its publisher and chief reporter, Ghys Fortuné Dombe Bemba, and suspends publication. *Les Dépêches de Brazzaville* is the government's mouthpiece. It is also the country's only daily newspaper and, despite its color printing and high quality paper, by far the cheapest. It is overseen by Jean-Paul Pigasse, a Frenchman, who maintains homes in both Brazzaville and Paris, and is paid roughly $40,000 per month for his troubles.[13] In addition to these newspapers, I gained access to the archives of the Government's *Journal Officiel*, which records appointments throughout the bureaucracy and internal security apparatus.

From these sources I constructed a series of original datasets. The first records biographic, social, and professional data for 1,300 party leaders, political appointees, colonels, generals, and legislators since 1970. The second records biographic and professional data for 15,000 members of the security apparatus – the armed forces, police, gendarmerie, and domestic surveillance apparatus, among others – since 2005. The third records electoral and membership data for 129 political parties. And the fourth records the participants in – and outcomes of – each of Congo's legislative elections since 1997.

1.2.4 Methodological Approach

The dissertation uses Sassou Nguesso's Congo to provide new insights into the mechanics of autocratic survival in contemporary Africa. But single country research designs necessarily trade a measure of external validity for analytical precision [188, 94]. Emblematic of autocratic Africa though Congo may be, the dissertation's sustained focus on Sassou Nguesso may limit the confidence with which we can apply its conclusions elsewhere.

[13] Interview with Jean-Marie Monange, 20 February 2012.

The dissertation balances precision and generality in two ways. Analytically, it employs formal models that distill the game of autocratic politics to its essentials. These formal models are anchored in – indeed, inspired by – the hours I spent in conversation with Congolese citizens. The formal models aim to capture their values and make sense of their choices. The models implicitly assume that Sassou Nguesso, like his political rivals and frustrated compatriots, are interchangeable with their counterparts elsewhere in autocratic Africa: that they possess the same objectives and the same set of tools with which to achieve them. What distinguishes autocrats, ambitious elites, and angry citizens is not the contours of their strategic environments, but the details. All autocrats must recruit for their regime's most sensitive appointments, monitor their occupants, and conduct elections; their appointees must decide whether to remain loyal and their citizens whether to protest.

The dissertation's formal models thus explain not only how Sassou Nguesso organizes politics in Congo: how he recruits for the regime's most sensitive positions, how he monitors and purges these appointees, and how he engineers opposition alliances and parliamentary elections. They also explain how autocrats elsewhere – who confront similar challenges, if slightly different strategic environments – do so differently. Empirically, then, the dissertation draws on a range of secondary source materials to illustrate the generality of its theoretical models. Most of these secondary sources are from autocratic Africa. In some cases, the dissertation draws from the Soviet successor states, whose rulers confronted multi-ethnic societies and nominally democratic institutions upon independence in the early 1990s.

To model autocrats as interchangeable, they must also be "rational." They must have preferences over outcomes, which they pursue as best they can, given the information they possess and the constraints they confront. This rationality assumption animates virtually all of modern economics and, increasingly, most empirical social sciences. Yet it is less obviously appropriate for the world's autocrats, whose venality and easy recourse to violence often seem distinctly irrational [55, 92]. Indded, Africa's autocrats have proven easier to caricature than most. Idi Amin famously styled himself "His

Excellency, President for Life, Field Marshal Al Hadji Doctor Idi Amin Dada, VC, DSO, MC, Lord of All the Beasts of the Earth and Fishes of the Seas and Conqueror of the British Empire in Africa in General and Uganda in Particular," while Jean Bedél Bokassa and Francisco Macias Nguema reportedly ate the remains of their political opponents [168, 97].

Yet there are equally good reasons to view the world's autocrats as more rational – indeed, more calculating – than either voters or politicians in advanced democracies. For as Aristotle [14] and Xenophon [191] observed centuries ago, ascending to power amidst intense political competition requires extraordinary cunning and foresight. With the stakes so great, maintaining power requires no less cunning [179]. Ultimately, however, the dissertation views these questions as empirical. The formal models are useful if they illuminate the instruments of autocratic survival [67].

1.3 Approaches to Autocratic Survival

In taking the institutional landscape as exogenous – a legacy of the Third Wave and the strength of Western creditors – this dissertation treats political institutions as an autocrat's inherited constraints rather than his instruments of survival. In so doing, the dissertation departs from the conventional wisdom among political scientists. For autocrats are far less powerful than most observers believe. They are beholden to the demands of creditors, constrained by the uncertain loyalties of their closest aides, and vulnerable to the millions of angry citizens whose neighborhoods surround their palaces. Autocrats are powerful when their compatriots believe so: when their citizens bend to their will. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's description of the chains that everywhere surround men is perhaps nowhere more appropriate than for modern autocrats.

In offering an alternative approach to autocratic survival in the modern world, however, this dissertation draws from a range of other scholarship.

1.3.1 Political Survival and the Oil Curse

If Table 1.2 illustrates the divide between the two Africas, it also offers a straightforward account of autocratic survival: oil wealth. Autocratic Africa produces, on average, 0.03 barrels of crude oil per day per citizen; at 2014 prices, if Africa's autocrats simply distributed these proceeds to their citizens, each would receive some $1, 200, less production fees. Congolese citizens would receive roughly $2, 800, more than double their annual income.

Scholars have linked crude oil deposits – and natural resources more generally – to less democracy [95, 153], more corruption [120], worse economic performance [187, 66, 25, 26], more civil war, and fewer freedoms for women [152, 153]. By replacing taxes as the main source of government funding, the arguments generally go, oil wealth severs the social contract between government and governed. Less dependent on tax revenue for income, governments have few incentives to respond to popular demands, just as citizens feel less entitled to public goods.[14] This revenue influx also enables rulers to purchase the support of elite rivals and finance a more robust security apparatus [23, 153]. In this reading, Africa's autocrats have resisted the force of nominally democratic institutions because of good fortune rather than cunning.

Evidence for the oil curse is mixed, however, as are its theoretical foundations. The effects of oil wealth may be conditional. Even if oil wealth does not *cause* autocracy, it may foster it in countries beset by income inequality [59] or political institutions that concentrate power in the hands of a narrow elite [151, 93]. Yet even these effects may be highly local. Employing a variety of datasets and estimation techniques, Haber and Menaldo [81] find no evidence that oil wealth causes autocracy. Still, oil may contribute to autocratic survival by reducing the risk of ouster by rival autocrats, though precisely why remains unclear [190].

For two reasons the account of political survival that follows makes few references to Congo's oil

[14] For an excellent summary, see Diamond and Mosbacher [56].

wealth. First, the dissertation seeks the instruments of political survival: the myriad ways that autocrats secure elite compliance and suppress popular unrest without recourse to violence. Second, in so doing, the dissertation treats oil wealth as a parameter, an exogenous source of state revenue. Divorced from the labor decisions of citizens, oil wealth is more akin to import licenses and monopoly production than income tax revenue. This dissertation regards Africa's oil producers as fundamentally no different than their counterparts. Some autocrats simply have access to greater financial resources.

By treating state revenue as a parameter, the dissertation's theoretical models explain how the instruments of political survival change as state revenue rises and falls. State revenue generally has two effects. First, political leaders are residual claimants on state revenue. Oil wealth, monopoly production, and other sources of rents render political power more dear, and thus political competition more intense. Incumbent autocrats have stronger incentives to retain power. Their rivals have stronger incentives to steal it. Democrats have stronger incentives to mobilize frustrated citizens in the hopes of seizing it. And frustrated citizens have stronger incentives to reshape their political system in the hopes of benefiting from it. Second, by diminishing their reliance on foreign aid, oil wealth partly inoculates incumbent autocrats from Western creditors. In turn, this renders the constraints imposed by nominally democratic institutions more nominal still. These two effects have a range of implications for how autocrats *exercise* their instruments of power: how they recruit and monitor the regime's most sensitive appointments, reward or purge them, target opposition parties for electoral alliances, organize local elections, and engineer the local security apparatus. Treating oil wealth – and state revenue more generally – as a parameter enables comparative statics. With clear predictions, the dissertation's theoretical models can be falsified.

In short, the dissertation is agnostic about whether oil, on balance, is a blessing or curse. Instead, the dissertation asks how access to – and the promise of – state revenue conditions the behavior of incumbent autocrats, their rivals, democrats, and citizens alike. For autocratic survival is an outcome

of the strategic behavior that occurs among them.

1.3.2 France, Autocracy, and *Françafrique*

Table 1.2 suggests a second explanation for the durability of Africa's autocrats: France. von Hayek [184] first asserted the superiority of British common law to French civil law. "The ideal of individual liberty," von Hayek [185] wrote, "seems to have flourished chiefly among people where ...judge-made law predominated." In the decades since, scholars have argued that former British colonies provide more secure property rights [136, 100], deliver more public goods [101], are less corrupt [101, 178], are more productive per worker [83], and are more democratic [89, 111, 17]. These effects tend to be weak, however, and other scholars have found no effect of British common law on economic growth [4]. Indeed, France may have even bequeathed more affluent cities to its former African colonies than Britain [105].

The effects of French colonialism may be less significant than the effects of French post-colonialism. For all its colonial sins, France left Congo – Brazzaville was the seat of French Equatorial Africa – among the most literate countries on the continent, with a literacy rate that reputedly approached 75% [123, 119]. But French engineers soon discovered oil in a handful of their former African colonies and, in the aftermath of World War II, the country was desperate for cheap energy. French President Charles de Gaulle envisioned two French oil companies to compete with the Anglo-Saxon "Seven Sisters." While Total focused on North Africa and the Middle East, Elf Aquitaine set its sights on Africa. As Le Floch-Prigent [104], Elf's former director, conceded:

> De Gaulle wanted a company under full state control, his secular arm in the oil world, to affirm his African policies. ...Elf is not just an oil company but a parallel diplomacy to control certain African states, above all at the key moment of decolonization. Alongside exploration and production, opaque operations were organized, to keep

certain countries stable.

France cultivated its African clients in three ways. First, in exchange for setting royalties per barrel far lower than the usual 33% oil companies paid to host countries, Elf Aquitaine directed between $0.20 and $0.60 of each barrel of crude to Africa's autocrats [162]. These *abonnements* – or subscriptions, as they were euphemistically known – were worth conservatively $20 million per year in the 1980s and closer to $40 million during the 1990s. If they required further assurance of Elf's goodwill, Africa's autocrats also periodically received "bonuses" of between $1 million and $25 million. These sums were generally deposited into the French Intercontinental Bank of Africa (FIBA), at which all major African autocrats had personal accounts. Founded in 1975, FIBA was presided over by Elf senior executive Jack Sigolet until 1996 [77].

Second, to enable its client autocrats "to pay civil servants' salaries and avoid revolts," Elf offered oil-backed loans [104]. When global oil prices fell and money for civil service salaries dried up, Elf permitted its African clients to reschedule debt payments in exchange for new oil concessions at even lower prices. Africa's autocrats so indebted their countries that, by the mid 1980s, almost all were borrowing against the state's share of future oil earnings. By 1980, Congo's debt was larger than its national output, and its debt per capita was Africa's highest [162]. Indeed, the Congolese state "gained virtually no petroleum revenues after 1986" [47], and by 1991, even though Congo was pumping $2 million of oil each day, the government was so broke that the civil service had not been paid in months. By 1995, fully two-thirds of the budget was allocated to debt service [162].

Third, France provided crucial military support, signaling to the African opposition that any *coups d'état* or popular uprisings would be suppressed. Indeed, since 1960 the French military intervened more than 30 times, often to secure its most reliable trading partners [64]. The French even built a garrison next to Omar Bongo's *Palais du bord de mer*, connected by a series of subterranean tunnels [162]. The relationship between France and its former African colonies was so close entangled that Gabonese President Omar Bongo once described it thus:

> Africa without France is like a car without a driver. But France without Africa is like a car without petrol.[15]

If African oil powered France, Africa's autocrats financed French political ambitions. In September 2011 lawyer Robert Bourgi admitted transferring suitcases of cash in the 1980s and 1990s to Jacques Chirac and Dominique de Villepin. The suitcases, he said, always contained between $1 million and $3 million, usually from Mobutu, Bongo, Sassou Nguesso, Obiang, Campaoré, Wade, and Gbagbo. Over 25 years, Bourgi estimated the total amount to be roughly $20 million. Indeed, Africa's autocrats provided more than $10 million for the 2002 presidential campaign alone. "I saw Chirac and Villepin count the money in front of me," he said. Despite denials by Chirac and de Villepin, Africa's autocrats themselves confirmed his account. Said a former advisor to Gbagbo: "Robert Bourgi is perfectly right. ...[The sum was] around $4 million brought from Abidjan to Paris in a suitcase." Jean-Francois Probst later claimed Omar Bongo alone provided Sarkozy nearly $3 million for his 2007 presidential campaign. The system is so corrupt – so damaging to Africa – that French journalist François-Xavier Verschave dubbed it *Françafrique*, a clever homonym for *France à fric*, or "France on the take" [181, 182, 183]. Verschave described Africa's autocrats this way:

> We have illegitimate governments which represent external interests. A number of these presidents are paid by Elf, for example. They serve Elf and France but not their own country. They get their medical treatment in France, their children study in France: they therefore don't concern themselves with health and education at home [161].

Still, France too is mostly absent from the story that follows. Like oil revenue, the dissertation treats the possibility of French intervention as a parameter. By increasing the autocrat's personal hold on power, it renders elite *coups d'état* and popular uprisings less likely to succeed. Likewise,

[15] Quoted in Shaxson [162]

France's willingness to offer its client autocrats untold wealth in exchange for heavily subsidized crude oil increased the value of power and thus intensifies domestic political competition. In the theoretical models that follow, these aspects of French intervention constitute the strategic environment confronting Africa's autocrats. They condition how various political tools are implemented and problems solved.

The dissertation also omits France because, increasingly, it too renders life as an autocrat more difficult. In March 2007 three human rights organizations – Survie, Sherpa, and the *Fédération des Congolais de la Diaspora* – submitted a criminal complaint to the *Tribunal de Grande Instance* of Paris that charged five African autocrats – Bongo, Blaise Campaoré, dos Santos, Obiang, and Sassou Nguesso – with public corruption. The *Parquet de Paris* opened a police investigation in June 2007, which, in November, was closed for "insufficient evidence." French daily *Le Monde* revealed the investigation's preliminary results in January 2008 to public uproar: the Sassou Nguesso and Bongo families owned at least 51 properties in France between them, hardly the "insufficient evidence" the *Tribunal* claimed. In response, Transparency International, Sherpa, and a Gabonese citizen submitted a new complaint in December 2008, which targeted Bongo, Obiang, and Sassou Nguesso. Two years later, after a lengthy appeals process, the *Cour de Cassation* accepted the complaint and assigned two judges to oversee the investigations. The results of these investigations alone: 40 properties belonging to the Bongo family, one mansion for the Obiang family, and 24 properties for the Sassou Nguesso family. In July 2012 the French courts issued an international arrest warrant for Obiang's son, and in 2013 they proceeded to seize several of Sassou Nguesso's properties. Publicly, of course, Sassou Nguesso and colleagues dismiss the investigations as a neocolonialist nuisance:

> I simply decided that my lawyer in Paris should [file a lawsuit for defamation] against these fellows, who are in reality just a few bourgeois from [the affluent Parisian suburbs] who have perhaps never set foot in Congo [6].

On another occasion:

> If this affair didn't reek of – let's say – colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, and gratuitous provocation, we would have let it die of its own poison.[16]

Privately, however, all three are terrified. The March 2007 lawsuits were partly inspired by Bruno Jacquet Ossébi, a remarkably courageous young journalist who documented the real estate holdings of Sassou Nguesso and his top aides on a website.[17] After a series of death threats, Ossébi was assassinated on February 2, 2009, when his Brazzaville home went up in flames. Witnesses watched as Sassou Nguesso's *Garde Républicaine* fled and Brazzaville's fire department, stationed some two blocks away, did nothing.[18]

Dubbed the *biens mal acquis* affair – or "ill-gotten gains" – these legal proceedings are fundamentally reshaping the relationship between France and its former colonies. The legal proceedings are deeply ironic. France is now prosecuting Africa's autocrats for the real estate holdings it helped them acquire. But the prospect of the asset seizures and international arrest warrants in retirement complicates things for Africa's autocrats. Like Gaddafi and al-Bashar, these threats may force them to resort to ever more severe tactics to retain power. But these threats also give them pause before they meet popular protests with unrestrained violence. And these threats render their allies less likely to comply, for fear they too could be targeted.

1.3.3 Political Survival, Western Leverage, and Autocratic "Organization"

Table 1.2 is consistent with a third explanation for the durability of Africa's autocrats: By sending less foreign aid and investment, Western creditors simply lack sufficient leverage to compel Africa's autocrats to respect term limits and organize fair elections. This fits neatly into the "competitive

[16] *La Semaine Africaine* 2709, 10 July 2007.
[17] See `http://congo-biensmalacquis.over-blog.com/`.
[18] Interview with Anonymous, date withheld for confidentiality.

authoritarian" framework developed by Levitsky and Way [107, 108, 109], who locate the sources of autocratic persistence after the Cold War in Western leverage and the ability of autocrats to resist opposition challenges. "Effective state and party organizations enhance incumbents' capacity to prevent elite defection, co-opt or repress opponents, defuse or crack down on protest, and win (or steal) elections," they contend. "Where states and governing parties are strong, autocrats are often able to survive despite vigorous opposition challenges. Where they are weak, incumbents may fall in the face of relatively weak opposition."

Rather than take "organizational strength" as exogenous – something from which autocrats may or may not benefit – scholars since have treated it as an outcome, a result either of conscious decisions by the autocrat or historical good fortune. Inspired by the remarkable durability of autocrats in Malaysia and Singapore, scholars increasingly focus on the role of single – or, at least, very dominant – political parties in sustaining the world's autocrats. "Ruling parties ...bridle elite ambitions and bind together otherwise fractious coalitions," Brownlee [37] finds. "Anchored in an institutional setting that generates political power and long-term security, rival opportunists cooperate." Similarly, Slater [166] argues that shared perceptions of threat compel financial and military elites to create "robust ruling parties" that foster collective survival. These party institutions, in turn, "produce fixed routines, loyalties, and patterns of interaction that transcend any particular individuals' attitudes about the proper form of political order," and generate autocratic durability in the process. "Robust ruling parties ...are ideal mechanisms for organizing mass participation" and "preventing elite defection," writes Slater [166]. They create a "political wilderness," where there are no "alternative routes to the political summit."

Like Brownlee [37] and Slater [166], this dissertation seeks the origins of "organizational strength." It departs from their accounts, however, in three ways. First, although single party regimes facilitated autocratic survival during the Cold War, Table 1.1 confirms, in the decades since they are more commonly associated with autocratic failure. This suggests that the historical durability of single

party regimes was generated more by Cold War dynamics than the institutions themselves. Insofar as regimes in Malaysia and Singapore survive without Soviet support, they may be historical outliers. Second, even if single party institutions generate elite compliance, as Levitsky and Way [109] make clear, Africa's autocrats increasingly lack access to those institutions. For Africa's autocrats – reliant on foreign aid, investment, and debt relief – have little choice but to acquiesce to the demands of Western creditors for nominally competitive elections waged by a range of political parties.

Finally, insofar as dominant ruling parties emerge amidst nominally democratic institutions – and, as Sassou Nguesso's PCT makes clear, they surely do – these dominant parties are outcomes of the strategic interactions the dissertation describes: the result of autocratic design and elite choice. Indeed, in autocratic Africa I find little evidence that ruling parties are made robust by conflicts decades past. More concretely, Sassou Nguesso has presided so resolutely over Congo not because of any cohesion generated among northerners by the 1997 civil war. To the contrary, veterans of Sassou Nguesso's civil war effort have proven as keen to engage in *coup d'état* conspiracies as their 1997 opponents. Rather, autocratic survival is the result of strategy, carefully crafted to induce elite loyalty and popular acquiescence despite institutional constraints. This is why, as one member of the Sassou Nguesso family privately confirmed to me, Africa's autocrats invest so much effort in assembling their coalitions, monitoring their appointees, and organizing the electoral process:

> Politics in Congo is high stakes. To survive in that kind of environment is incredible. [Sassou Nguesso] is a political genius. He works harder than anyone I've ever seen.[19]

Dominant parties emerge not from historical accident. Rather, they emerge when elites *believe* autocrats are strong: when loyalty to the autocrat provides the best path to political success and financial fortune. When elites *believe* their interests are better served by mobilizing frustrated citizens – by playing, in short, for their political fortunes under democracy – their defections render the

[19] Interview with Anonymous ??, date withheld for confidentiality.

autocrat's political party weak. Autocrats know this, and they organize politics accordingly. This dissertation explores how.

1.4 The Plan of the Dissertation

The dissertation probes the sources of political survival in contemporary Africa by charting Sassou Nguesso's return to prominence. Accordingly, the chapters are organized chronologically. But each chapter also focuses on a distinct problem of autocratic rule. Each describes a new landscape Sassou Nguesso confronted, analyzes his actions and those of his compatriots by abstracting their essentials into a series of related game theoretic models, and then employs the datasets described above to probe more deeply still. In recounting Sassou Nguesso's ascent both chronologically and analytically, the dissertation explains how the instruments of Sassou Nguesso's power caused his compatriots to view him as powerful, and how he exploited these beliefs to grow stronger still. It also explains how these instruments evolved – often together – as a result of state revenue and foreign pressure.

Chapter 2 provides historical context for the story that follows. It begins by documenting Sassou Nguesso's rise in the 1960s and 1970s: his relatively disadvantaged youth, entrance into the government, and leading roles in both the 1977 and 1979 *coups d'état*, the latter of which brought him to power. Chapter 2 then narrates his consolidation of power in the early 1980s and his ultimate fall in 1991. Sassou Nguesso emerged from the 1979 *coup d'état* as a "first among equals." And while he tried to eliminate those equals, he never entirely succeeded; and this, as subsequent chapters suggest, circumscribed both the recruitment and monitoring techniques he could employ. The chapter concludes with Sassou Nguesso's retreat to Paris, from where, with French support, he quietly plotted his political return. Having been humiliated at the National Conference in 1991 and the presidential elections in 1992, Sassou Nguesso had little chance to regain power at the ballot box. Hence he provoked the 1997 civil war; he owed his victory to French president Jacques Chirac, who coordinated

Angola's ultimately decisive intervention.

Chapter 3 begins on October 25, 1997, the day of Sassou Nguesso's triumphant return to Brazzaville. He had first to allocate the government's most sensitive, lucrative portfolios: the senior military leadership, important ministries, and parastatal directorships. Chapter 3 develops a theory of recruitment in autocracies to explain why Sassou Nguesso appointed who he did and how his appointment criteria evolved over time. Unsurprisingly, Sassou Nguesso scattered his most trusted sons and nephews throughout the government; he also displayed a distinct preference for his wartime comrades. Yet not all loyalists did equally well. Chapter 3 explains which did, which did not, and why.

Although Sassou Nguesso reclaimed Brazzaville in October 1997, his hold on Brazzaville was exceptionally tenuous. For his Cobra militia won its military victory without actually destroying Lissouba's forces: When four Angolan MIG 21 warplanes destroyed Brazzaville's Presidential Palace on October 13, Lissouba's Cocoye militia fled to Bouenza and Kolélas' Ninjas to Pool. Yet Sassou Nguesso's position improved dramatically between 1997 and 2002. He carefully recruited for his government's most sensitive positions, removing the most likely disloyalists; his military put down the rebellion in Pool and launched a quiet genocide against his former opponents; and global oil prices spiked as he restructured the state oil company and renegotiated oil contracts, drastically increasing his foreign reserve. All this was punctuated by the 2002 presidential elections, which Sassou Nguesso claimed with a remarkable – and, obviously, wildly implausible – 90% of the vote.

Chapters 4 and 5 document two critical monitoring devices that both facilitated these achievements and evolved accordingly. Upon returning to power, Sassou Nguesso began duplicating his government's most sensitive portfolios: the military leadership and oil sector. Chapter 4 documents this system's expansion in the early 2000s and presents a theory of parallel governments in autocracies. It argues that, since an autocrat's appointees routinely have private information about their portfolios, autocrat's must somehow elicit elite honesty. Autocrats do this by creating competition among elites: assigning the same task to several elites, who then attempt to outperform each other.

Chapter 4 explains which regime portfolios are targeted for duplication, which elites are appointed as duplicates, and how autocrats "guard the guardians." It also explains how systems that encourage denunciation do not devolve into contests of denunciation and counter-denunciation.

Chapter 5 documents Sassou Nguesso's freemasonry lodge, the *Grande Lodge du Congo* (GLC), a social institutions that forces frequent interaction among members. Sassou Nguesso created the GLC during his Paris exile, while plotting his return to Brazzaville. Its first members were his family and closest political allies. In 1999 he transformed the GLC into *Elikia*, a "sorcery masonic lodge, and in 2002 he expanded its membership rapidly, ultimately requiring all high level elites to initiate. To make sense of *Elikia*'s origins and implementation, Chapter 5 develops a theory of compulsory social institutions in autocracy. It explains which elites are targeted for membership, how the institution conditions its members' behavior, and how the institution evolves over time. *Elikia*, all Congolese citizens acknowledge, is central to Sassou Nguesso's hold on power. Chapter 5 explains how.

To "celebrate" Congo's 44th anniversary, in August 2004 an anonymous group of regime insiders published an open letter to their compatriots, which was delivered by courier to Brazzaville's foreign embassies. The letter detailed some 64 assets owned by the Sassou Nguesso family: the most prominent office buildings in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire, eight construction companies that received the bulk of state contracts, seven food production companies, as well as major holdings in the telecommunications and banking sectors. The list gave the impression that the Sassou Nguesso family owned virtually all of Congo, and ultimately helped persuade French courts to pursue the *biens mal acquis* affair.[20] The list was so detailed, indeed, that it could have only been the work of regime insiders, and left left Sassou Nguesso family "paranoid." If there was ever a moment for a massive elite purge, this was it. For students of autocratic politics have long believed that autocrats remove elites from power arbitrarily, the better to remind them of the centrality – and potential transience –

[20] Interview with Guy Mafimba, 1 August 2014.

of the autocrat's favor. Sassou Nguesso responded quite differently. Since he could not be sure who betrayed him, he punished no one. Indeed, his subsequent ministerial shuffle was no different than those that preceded it. Sassou Nguesso has long cultivated a reputation for rewarding loyal, competent service with certain reappointment. Chapter 6 documents this, and presents a theory of shuffling in autocracies. It clarifies when autocrats engage in massive, unannounced purges, when they refrain, and how this choice varies across regime portfolio. Most importantly, it argues that tenure insecurity is a mark of weakness, optimal only when autocrats lack the more efficient monitoring devices described in Chapters 4 and 5.

As the 2007 legislative elections approached, Sassou Nguesso sat atop Congo, virtually unchallenged. Flush with oil revenue, the state treasury provided Sassou Nguesso with at least 20 homes in Paris and the French riviera, and likely others beyond. At home, the Congolese elite commemorated national holidays – Independence Day, Christmas, and New Years – by purchasing full page announcements in *La Semaine Africaine*, which congratulated Sassou Nguesso for his achievements in the year gone by and wished him luck in the year ahead. Sassou Nguesso felt so secure domestically that, in 2005, he campaigned tirelessly – and ultimately successfully – for the 2006 African Union presidency. So unconcerned was he with *coups d'état* that, between his foreign diplomatic trips and annual vacations in Marbella, Spain, Sassou Nguesso spent roughly one out of every three days outside Congo.

He responded by financing dozens of new political parties, all of which espoused the same electoral platforms: unconditional support for Sassou Nguesso himself. The parties served less to crowd out opposition parties – Congolese citizens knew these new parties were financed by the autocrat – and more as platforms for regime lieutenants to compete *against each other* for election to the National Assembly. These contests were ferocious, indeed, and remarkably fair. Only four years later, however, with a looming constitutional revision to remove presidential term limits, Sassou Nguesso took a different tack. Before delegations from China, Cuba, and North Korea, a Sassou Nguesso sur-

rogate announced that these satellite parties would be disbanded and electoral competition among loyalists sharply limited. Chapter 8 presents a theory of parliamentary elections in autocracies. It explains why autocrats force electoral competition among loyalists, when, and where.

Notwithstanding Sassou Nguesso's dominance, the months prior to the 2009 presidential elections were fraught with tension. Shielded by international attention, Congo's opposition leaders denounced Sassou Nguesso more acerbically than ever. Indeed, the *biens mal acquis* affair provided fresh evidence of massive graft. Losing, literally, was not an option. A poll on Sassou Nguesso's reelection website asked visitors to predict the election's outcome. The possibilities presented by the website: Sassou Nguesso wins in the first round of voting, Sassou Nguesso wins in a second round run-off, or the respondent has no opinion. Though his victory was assured – Sassou Nguesso ultimately claimed some 80% of the vote – he proceeded to forge a series of alliances with opposition parties, sacrificing ministerial portfolios to their leaders that could otherwise reward loyalists. Chapter 7 presents a theory of electoral alliances with opposition parties. It explains why autocrats create costly alliances when they can guarantee victory with fraud, which opposition parties they target, and when these alliances occur.

On March 4, 2012, Brazzaville woke to a series of explosions at its Mpila munitions depot. The depot was reduced to ashes and, located less than a mile from Sassou Nguesso's private residence, so too was his final line of defense against domestic enemies. The explosions erased 14, 000 homes from the cityscape and killed as many as 2, 000 citizens. Notwithstanding its official denials, the regime almost certainly believed the explosions were the opening salvos in an aborted *coup d'état*. They also served as a reminder that Sassou Nguesso's power rests also on the credible threat of repression. For although the 2009 presidential elections were accompanied by a handful of small protests, southerners remain deeply hostile, and activists are convinced that the international spotlight would prevent Sassou Nguesso from opening fire on a thousand protesters outside his palaces, in Brazzaville or Congo's 10 regional capitals. How, then, does Sassou Nguesso render violent sup-

pression credible – when, increasingly, it is not – without provoking aggrieved populations? Chapter 9 presents a theory of the internal security apparatus in autocracies. It explains why different regions are governed with different mixes of public goods and repression, as well as variation within the ranks of the internal security apparatus itself.

Chapter 10 concludes the dissertation. It does so by describing how I envision transforming the dissertation into a book. It provides an overview of two additional chapters, which together, I hope, will illustrate the generality of the dissertation's findings.

In narrating Sassou Nguesso's return to power, this dissertation details the most unsavory parts of autocratic Africa: political assassinations, widespread censorship, gross economic corruption, and a range of other human rights abuses that seemingly belong to the past. They do not. Faced with them, the critical objectivity required from social science becomes all the more important. This, too, is why the dissertation pairs formal and quantitative methods with oral and archival sources. For when critical objectivity becomes more difficult, analytical transparency becomes more important.

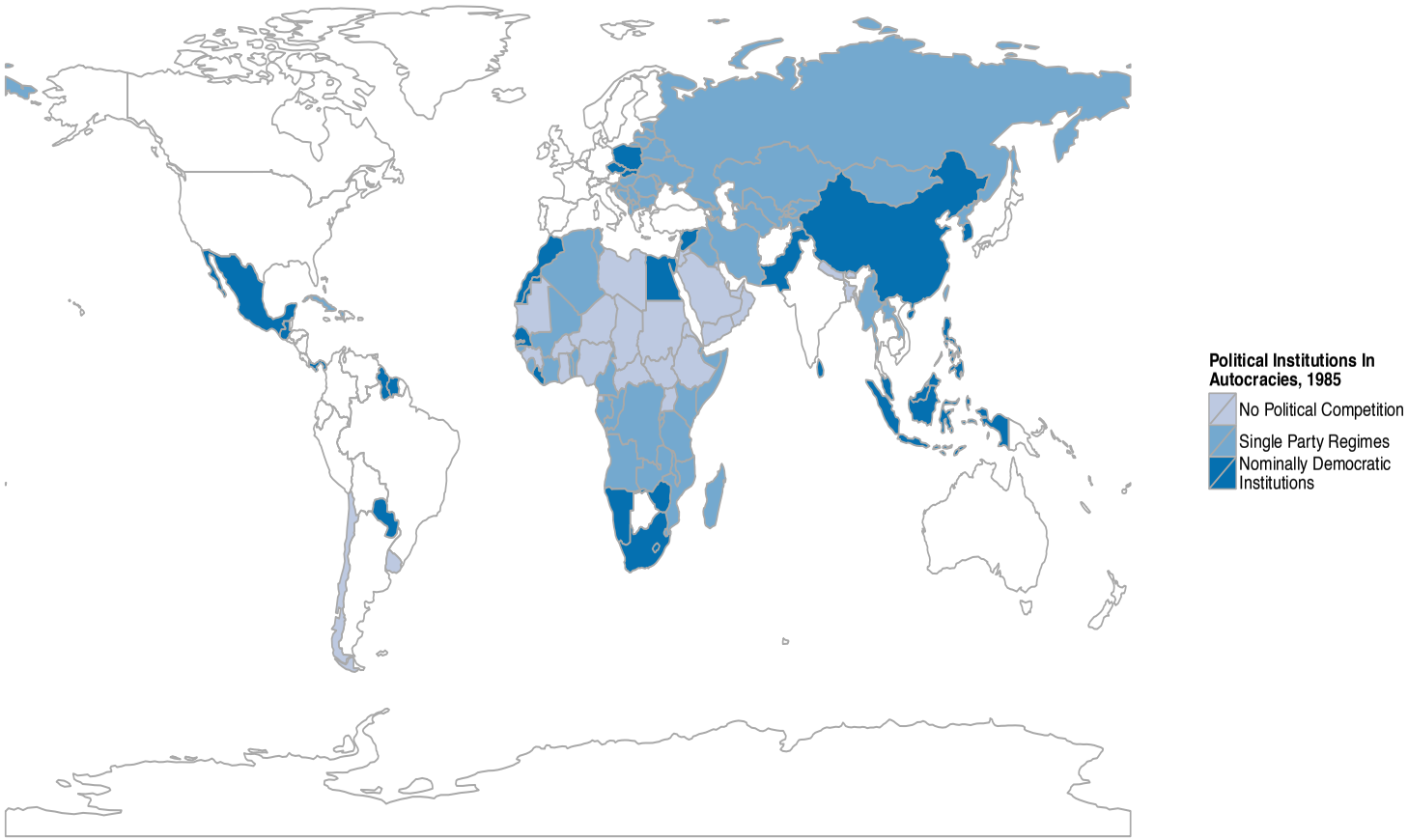

Figure 1.8: The world's autocracies in 1985, prior to the Third Wave of Democracy. Democracies appear in white.

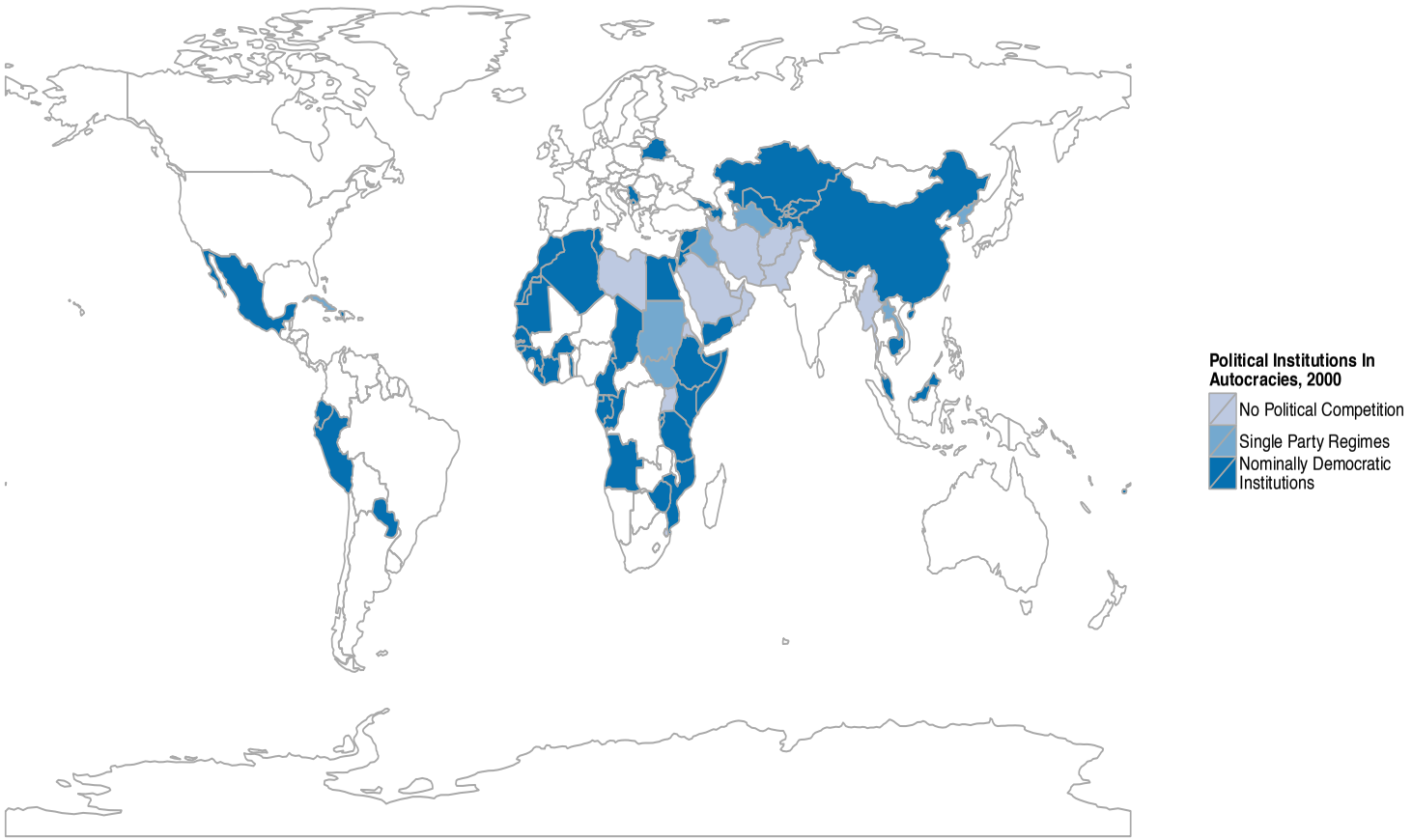

Figure 1.9: The world's autocracies in 2000, just after the Third Wave of Democracy. Democracies appear in white.

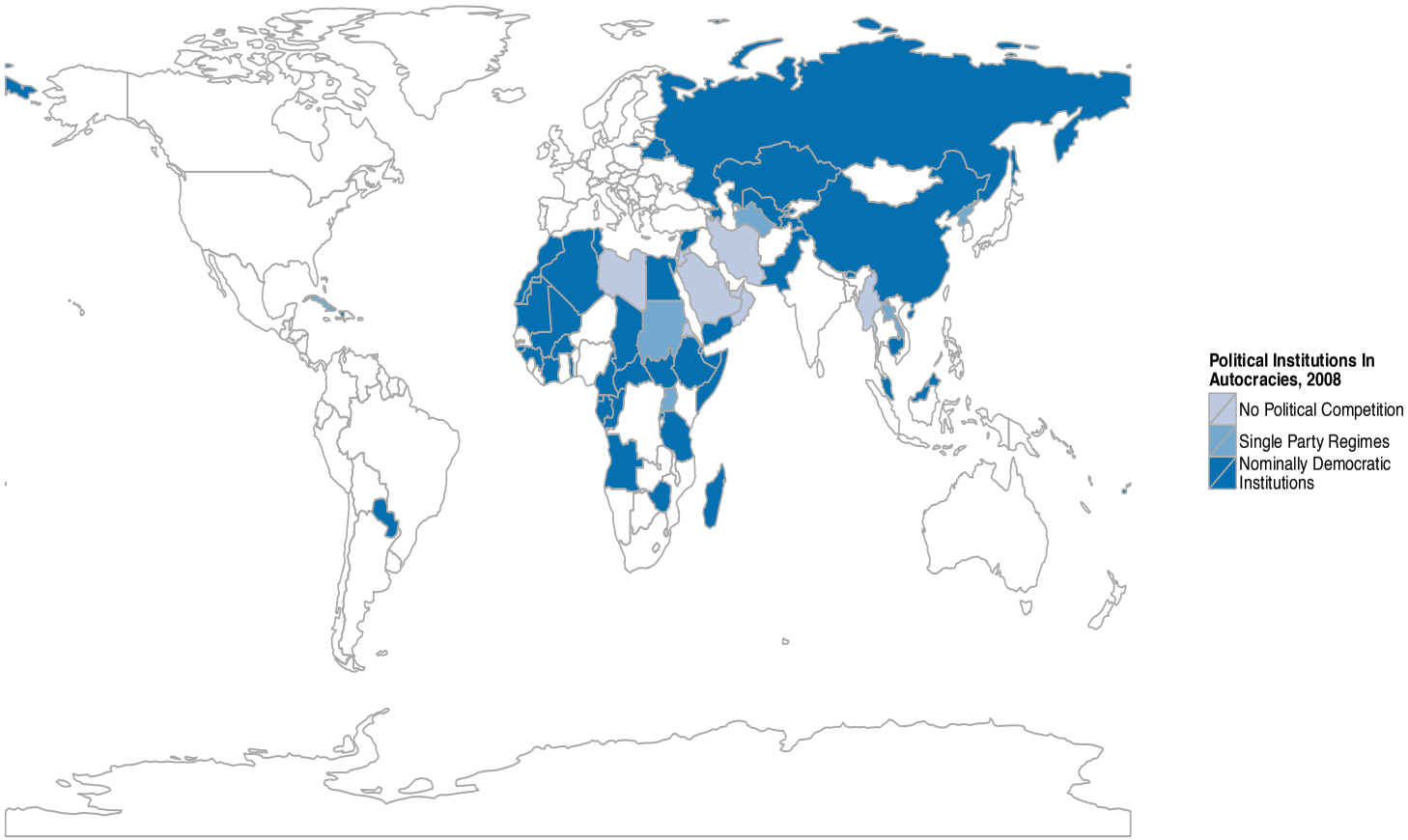

Figure 1.10: The world's autocracies in 2008, nearly two decades after the Third Wave of Democracy. Democracies appear in white.

2

The Rise, Decline, and Rise of Denis Sassou Nguesso

My training as a soldier taught me the importance of relationships of strength: that one should exploit weakness and aim for unexpected tactical maneuvers.

– Denis Sassou Nguesso, 1997.[1]

Like so many autocracies, Congo's history is an ambiguous, contested affair. For its history has been written mostly by the victors: beneficiaries of successive northern dominated governments, culminating with Sassou Nguesso himself. This tradition began early, with Théophile Obenga's *La Vie de Marien Ngouabi, 1938-1977*, a 1977 paean to the country's first northern president. Appointed to the PCT Central Committee in 1972, Obenga served as Foreign Affairs minister under Ngouabi and his successor, Jacques Joachim Yhombi-Opango; who also penned the volume's introduction. Ngouabi, Obenga [137] tells us, was not only a patriot, but also an accomplished physicist and athlete. More importantly, Obenga's account constituted the first salvo in a larger effort to pin Ngouabi's assassination on a low ranking southerner, despite considerable evidence that Sassou Nguesso himself directed the plot.

This struggle over Congolese history only intensified with Sassou Nguesso's return following the 1997 civil war. The regime now, however, enjoys a trump card: a relationship with the L'Harmattan publishing house, based in Paris. Between 1998 and 2005 L'Harmattan published a series of books authored by Sassou Nguesso allies, which exculpated him from all manner of sins: Sassou Nguesso was a democrat for permitting the National Conference of 1991, a victim of Lissouba's aggression during the 1997 war, innocent of the genocide against southerners in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and the subject of unjust accusations of corruption and fraud since [170, 171, 172, 138]. The most prolific of these allies, Paul Soni-Benga, was even financed by the dictator himself.[2] Soni-Benga hoped to win a lucrative government post for his efforts.[3] Instead he received a reporting position

[1] See Sassou Nguesso [157].
[2] Interview with Patrice Yengo, 8 January 2011.
[3] Interview with Guy Mafimba, 5 January 2012.

for DRTV, the Brazzaville radio outfit operated by General Norbert Dabira, who between October 1997 and December 2012 served as Inspector General of the Congolese army.

In 2009 the relationship between L'Harmattan and Sassou Nguesso's government was formalized. L'Harmattan opened an outfit in Brazzaville itself, known as L'Harmattan Congo, directed by Anatole Collinet Makosso. His day job since 1998: Chief of Staff to the First Lady, Madame Antoinette Sassou Nguesso, and counselor to the President himself. Indeed, the first book published by L'Harmattan Congo was Makosso's own book of poems in memory of Edith Bongo, Sassou Nguesso's daughter and Omar Bongo's wife, who died in March 2009. Entitled *For Edith*, Madame Sassou Nguesso also wrote the volume's postcript [121]. Sassou Nguesso again called on Obenga prior to the country's 50th anniversary celebration. Obenga's charge was even broader: to produce the "definitive," multi-volume account of Congolese history. Of course, Obenga endorsed Sassou Nguesso during his 2009 election campaign, widely regarded as completely fraudulent. In return, according to Brazzaville's *radio trottoir* – the city's rumor mill – Obenga will receive a ministerial position in an upcoming government. Sassou Nguesso also benefits from a convenient marriage alliance with Francois Soudan, longtime editor of *Jeune Afrique*, a leading francophone African affairs magazine.[4]

This chapter presents an alternative account of Congo's recent history. It underscores three critical themes for the chapters that follow. First, Sassou Nguesso confronted very different strategic environments upon seizing power in 1979 and 1997. In 1979 Sassou Nguesso inherited a single party regime supported by the Soviet Union and French oil interests. By contrast, following the 1997 civil war, Sassou Nguesso inherited a set of nominally democratic institutions and massive debt, which gave him little choice but to respect the demands of Western creditors. Second, although northern Congo is scarcely populated and poor in natural resources – Congo's lucrative oil fields lie off Pointe-Noire, the country's southernmost city – northerners have controlled the national military

[4]Soudan started working at *Jeune Afrique* in October 1977.

since independence. This dominance enabled a clique of northern officers to seize power in 1968, which they relinquished for only five years in the 1990s. Third, notwithstanding this northern dominance, there has been no shortage of competition among northerners for control of the state apparatus: between different branches of Sassou Nguesso's family and within the northern bloc itself.

In providing historical context for the rest of the dissertation, this chapter pursues a second purpose. It presents a more balanced narrative of Sassou Nguesso's rise, fall, and rise. This chapter builds on the work of three Congolese scholars: Rémy Bazenguissa-Ganga, Patrice Yengo, and Benjamin Moutsila. Their accounts of Congolese politics prior to the 1991 National Conference, the civil wars of the 1990s, and the first years of Sassou Nguesso's return to power, respectively, are magisterial [20, 192, 131]. They are also constrained by French libel laws and and Sassou Nguesso's penchant for libel allegations and physical threats. This chapter takes seriously the role of oral history, largely because most published secondary sources are informed – or, insofar as they rely on other published sources, constrained – by the official histories propagated by the regime itself. In constructing the historical account below, I rely on thousands of hours of interviews with Congolese citizens who were implicated in the events I describe. Although my sources are anonymous, I have independently corroborated the accounts of each. The chapter draws equally on the archives of *La Semaine Africaine*, *Les Dépêches de Brazzaville*, and *Talassa*, and a range of primary source material.

This chapter is organized chronologically. Section 2.1 details Sassou Nguesso's unlikely rise to the presidency. Viewed as unserious by his 1970s colleagues, Sassou Nguesso almost certainly orchestrated Ngouabi's assassination and then Yhombi-Opango's forced resignation and subsequent 12 year incarceration. Section 2.2 documents Sassou Nguesso's subsequent efforts to consolidate his position atop the state and then his humiliation at the 1991 National Conference. Section 2.3 follows Sassou Nguesso to Paris: from his creation of a freemasonry lodge in 1995 to his deliberate provocation of the 1997 civil war.

2.1 Education of a Dictator: 1943-1979

Strikingly little is known of Sassou Nguesso's youth. He was born Denis Sassou – he added Nguesso much later, for political reasons – in 1943, in the village of Edou, Cuvette, just outside the slightly larger village of Oyo, which he ultimately adopted as his home. Sassou Nguesso is famously solicitous toward his mother, Mama Mouébara. Like most Congolese youth, he entered primary school at age six in his home village. To continue his education at age 10, he walked 100 kilometers to Owando in the company of some 10 to 20 other children, which required roughly two days. Among the youngest of her children – perhaps the youngest – Sassou Nguesso's mother normally accompanied her son, apparently the only parent to do so. These long walks, according to his autobiography, were the foundation for their intense mutual affection [157]. Sassou Nguesso ascended to the presidency in 1979, just 36; his mother died three years later, in 1982. In her death she has been elevated to "quasi-religious" status. Each May 10 occasions a state pilgrimage to her grave [131], an opportunity for elites to signal their loyalty or, at least, not have their loyalty questioned.

Notwithstanding the cult status afforded his mother, Sassou Nguesso's father remains a mystery. Sassou Nguesso's autobiography claims his father was among Edou's village chiefs, widely recognized as a moral authority and talented hunter. With six wives and a number of children, Sassou Nguesso's ostensible paternal lineage was thus sufficiently noble for a future president. Yet about his father we know nothing else: not his name, date of birth, date of death, or anything else. Indeed, of his father's ostensibly numerous children, Sassou Nguesso officially recognizes only two brothers: Valentine Ambendet, who died in 2004, and Maurice, now among the dictator's most trusted advisors and in whose name much of the family's fortune remains. Although the identity of Sassou Nguesso's father has likely been lost to history, there is some evidence he hailed from Benin. This, indeed, would explain Sassou Nguesso's considerable real estate holdings in an otherwise poor cor-

ner of the continent: his mansion along the Atlantic coast and a 750 acre ostrich farm in the north.[5]

At age 13 Sassou Nguesso earned a coveted spot in one of the country's four high schools. He was assigned to Dolisie, in the southern Niari region, where between 1956 and 1961 he studied to become a high school teacher. Judged too young to become a teacher yet too intelligent to be forced from education altogether, Sassou Nguesso applied to the Brazzaville school in 1961. With only 30 spaces, young Sassou Nguesso was rejected. According to his autobiography, he lacked the governmental connections required to secure appointment. His rejection proved fortunate for him and disastrous for the country. Shortly afterwards, he learned that the French military was organizing an officer candidate school, following which the best students would be commissioned as officers in the Congolese military. Sassou Nguesso enrolled, was selected, and in July 1962 was promoted to sublieutenant in the reserves. Two weeks later Marien Ngouabi, Jacques Joachim Yhombi-Opango, and Alfred Raoul were named sublieutenants as well, though in active duty; a measure of military dominance, this group constitutes four of Congo's seven presidents, and collectively have ruled Congo for all but five years since 1968. Sassou Nguesso was precocious. Only 19 years old, his counterparts were 24, 23, and 32, respectively.

2.1.1 The Rise and Assassination of Marien Ngouabi

Sassou Nguesso discovered Europe in late 1963, when he enrolled in an infantry course at Saint-Maixent, France. Whether he passed is unclear: Clark and Decalo [49], Moutsila [131] claims not. But shortly after his 1964 return he was made commander of the first para-trooper company, one of two. Ngouabi oversaw the full corps, seconded by Yhombi-Opango.

Alphonse Massamba-Débat was declared president on December 19, 1963, some five months after a *coup d'état* removed Fulbert Youlou, the country's first president. Massamba-Débat declared his *Mouvement National de la Révolution* the only legal political party, promulgated alliances with

[5] Interview with Guy Mafimba, 13 March 2011. See also *La Lettre du Continent*, June 2004.

the Soviet Union and China, nationalized missionary schools and broad swathes of the economy, and welcomed guerrillas targeting the colonial regime in Angola. To asset control over the military, he also created an armed "civil defense" force within the MNR's youth wing, which, in 1966, he attempted to merge with the military. Ngouabi was the military representative on the MNR central committee, and he responded angrily. As punishment Massamba-Débat sent him to Pointe-Noire, far from the seat of power; Ngouabi continued to speak out, and so Massamba-Débat ordered him stripped of rank and incarcerated. After his supporters in the military mutinied, Ngouabi was released. Only two years later he took power altogether, and shortly thereafter made Sassou Nguesso his Defense Minister.

Although the country experienced some growth during the mid 1970s, per capita GDP fell precipitously in 1976 and 1977. Governing, in short, was difficult, and Ngouabi thought himself unprepared. On March 1, 1977, Massamba-Débat addressed a letter to Ngouabi. Resign, he advised Ngouabi, and the two would rule jointly and according to their comparative advantages: Ngouabi controlling the military and Massamba-Débat the civilian apparatus [182]. The two met on March 3 at Ngouabi's residence, in the presence of their wives, at which point Ngouabi remained skeptical [20]. His views evolved over the next two weeks, for by mid March he was prepared to consider Massamba-Débat's offer more seriously. Barthélemy Kikadidi, a junior military officer and fellow southerner, arranged a meeting between the two outside military headquarters in downtown Brazzaville.

The city is small, however, and the clique of northern military officers that surrounded Ngouabi – and that would be most damaged by the compromise – caught wind of it. Four northerners – Sassou Nguesso, Florent Ntsiba, Justin Lekoundzou, and Pierre Anga – agreed to take Ngouabi hostage, following which they would keep the presidency for themselves.[6] They each had their rea-

[6]These events were recounted in a memorandum entitled *Les evenements de 18 mars*, which circulated among the highest levels of the military and intelligence apparatus. Copies that, somehow, were distributed beyond this circle were often burned, for fear of reprisal. This account is pieced together from a report pro-

sons. Among the founding members of the PCT, Lekoundzou served as Ngouabi's Minister of Industry and Mines between 1971 and 1973; then demoted to Director General of *Congolaise de Raffinage*, the state oil refinery, Ngouabi intended to fire him for mismanagement. Anga, from Owando as well, served as Ngouabi's bodyguard from 1973 until 1977, when Ngouabi relieved him. Although Florent Ntsiba was chief of presidential security, he had no particular affinity for Ngouabi, and would be rewarded handsomely when it was finished. Elf gave its tacit agreement, for Ngouabi had also threatened to nationalize Congo's oil industry if Elf did not accept additional taxation to curb the country's budget deficit [169].

Ngouabi spent the morning of March 18 at the university, where he taught a 9.00am physics course. He returned to his office at military headquarters at 11.00am, and at 1.00pm met Cardinal Émile Biayenda, Archbishop of Brazzaville and the country's first cardinal. Close friends, their meeting adjourned abruptly at 1.10pm, when Ngouabi received a call from Sassou Nguesso, then an army commandant and Defense Minister. Their conversation was brief:

> Sassou Nguesso: Captain [Yves] Motando had problems with his subordinates at the firing range [at Djiri, just outside Brazzaville] and has sought refuge at the Hotel Mistral.
>
> Ngouabi: Okay, I'll be right there.

Among his closest friends, Ngouabi promptly decamped for the Mistral, driven by his brother-in-law in a white Peugeot 404. According to one account:

> [Ngouabi] did not believe Sassou Nguesso possessed the courage to depose him. He was far too interested and preoccupied by "affairs of the skirt" than by political power. Yhombi-Opango yes, but not Sassou Nguesso!

duced by the 1991 National Conference, which resembled a "Truth and Reconciliation Commission," and interviews with people indirectly involved. The National Conference's report is now virtually impossible to find in print, since it has been destroyed by the regime.

Since Yhombi-Opango was inaugurating a newly paved road in their native Owando, Ngouabi was less concerned [20].

Ngouabi found the Mistral deserted upon his arrival. Lekoundzou appeared, surprisingly, and escorted Ngouabi to the second floor, room 8, where Motando was ostensibly waiting. He was met instead by Anga, Pascal Mouassiposso, and Carlos, a Cuban doctor. Although they were to take him alive, Anga stabbed him repeatedly: "I warned you. I'm not crazy and you will never say it again." Ngouabi lay on the floor, mortally wounded.

Lekoundzou called Sassou Nguesso from the hotel reception. He left his office at 1.25pm, accompanied by Tsiba. Ngouabi's lifeless body before him, Sassou Nguesso conceives the cover-up: They knew Kikadidi would soon arrive at the presidential palace, so the assassination could be pinned on him, a southern conspiracy to avenge Massamba-Débat and reclaim power from the north. After instructing Carlos and Mouassiposso to wash Ngouabi's corpse and then the bloodied room, Sassou Nguesso sent Lekoundzou to find a clean uniform. Sassou Nguesso then explained the plan:

> A group of men will arrive soon at the presidency. They have a meeting with Ngouabi. These are the faithful of Massamba-Débat. We'll put responsibility for the murder on them. Pierre and Doctor Carlos will bring Marien's body back to the presidency, appropriately dressed. Those who can see the car must not realize that Marien is dead. So arrange yourselves to support him well. Once you arrive at headquarters, leave the body by the garage while Massamba-Débat's supporters are inside. ...Make sure your men who are on post don't intervene when they hear machine gun fire, and once people ask them what happened, they should say: "Captain Yves Motando shot at President Ngouabi."

Just before Sassou Nguesso left, Anga approached him:

> Anga: I'm sorry, my Commandant, I don't know what happened to me. Thank you

for all you're doing to save me.

Sassou Nguesso: It's fine. Most of all, pay attention moving forward. Just call me at the house after the machine gun fire.

The hotel's proprietor, Madame Solange Mattei, was forced to leave Congo the next day, though given an unspecified sum for her troubles; her hotel was soon destroyed.

Kikadidi arrived at 2.15pm, and at 2.25pm a black Peugeot 504 arrived as well. Ngouabi's brother-in-law drove, and in the rear Ngouabi's dead body was perched between Anga and Carlos, each with a PMAK assault rifle. As the car approached the garage, Anga and Carlos fled, leaving a pistol next to Ngouabi's body. Kikadidi and three colleagues are told that Ngouabi is feeling unwell, and to help him in from the garage. Once outside, they are greeted by a wave of machine gun fire. Only Kikadidi escaped alive; he hid for 11 months. Ngouabi was driven to the military hospital by his eldest son, Marien.

As planned, the assassination was attributed to a southern power grab. Kikadidi, the story went, murdered Ngouabi at Massamba-Débat's behest; Ngouabi had unjustly removed southerners from power, and this constituted southern revenge. Of course, the cover-up required removing anyone not directly implicated who knew the truth. After being beaten by Sassou Nguesso himself, Cardinal Biayenda was murdered on March 22; standing over his grave, Cardinal Biayenda was shot several times in the back, and then buried alive. Days later Sassou Nguesso sent a telegram to Pope John Paul II, expressing his condolences.[7] Massamba-Débat was murdered three days later. Although Kikadidi escaped to Brazzaville's southern quarter – where he lived clandestinely – he was ultimately executed on February 13, 1978.

Ngouabi was ultimately treated as a martyr. Indeed, Sassou Nguesso himself delivered the eulogy at the April 2 funeral, held at Brazzaville's *hotel de ville*, steps away from the military headquarters

[7]Interview with Gabriel, 8 January 2011. This informant received testimony from a pair of French nuns who took confession from the guards who killed Biayenda.

where the conspiracy emerged and a few hundred yards from the Mistral itself. Sassou Nguesso addressed Ngouabi's mother directly, and in language befitting the cult of personality that would follow: "You have given to Congo, to Africa, and to the world, a man who will always guide our steps" [137]. Over the next year, allusions to Ngouabi were littered across Brazzaville. The University of Brazzaville was renamed the Marien Ngouabi University; a museum in his honor was opened on July 31; and the date of his assassination was decreed a national holiday, henceforth referred to as the Day of Supreme Sacrifice. He even received his own mausoleum, steps from the Hotel Mistral. Across the top it reads *Gloire Immortelle au Président Marien Ngouabi, Fondateur du PCT*, "Immortal Glory to President Marien Ngouabi, Founder of the PCT."

A still more difficult decision followed: Who would assume the presidency? For although Sassou Nguesso masterminded the assassination, numerous elites were complicit; and Sassou Nguesso was not necessarily the most powerful among them. It was essential, of course, that power remain in military hands. Hence Yhombi-Opango, Sassou Nguesso, Ntsiba, and others formed a *Comité Militaire du Parti*, which would displace Jean-Pierre Thystère-Tchicaya, a civilian and the second ranking member of the PCT, and rule as a junta. The *Comité Militaire* advertised itself as the natural inheritor of Ngouabi's legacy: "Let us ever immortalize," its motto went, "our guide, comrade Marien Ngouabi, in work, rigor, and revolutionary discipline" [20].

Yhombi-Opango was the consensus choice to lead the *Comité Militaire*, mostly for pragmatic reasons. Educated at Saint-Cyr, Yhombi-Opango was Congo's only general; from Owando, Ngouabi's home village, Yhombi-Opango's appointment might placate Ngouabi's most vociferous partisans. The choice was also relatively unthreatening to Sassou Nguesso himself. Notwithstanding Yhombi-Opango's rank, Sassou Nguesso was regarded as closest to the military, a proximity his position as Defense Minister only solidified. With the country's borders closed and a curfew in place, the *Comité Militaire* consolidated power. It dissolved the *Assemblée Populaire Nationale* and assorted local governments. Sassou Nguesso moved to consolidate his own power as well, giving Anga and

Matondo responsibility for the military zones of Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire, respectively. Any discussion of higher taxes on Elf or simply nationalizing the oil sector altogether died with Ngouabi [182].

Yhombi-Opango's position was weak. For the PCT old guard – displaced, after all, by the *Comité Militaire* and led by Thystère-Tchicaya, the most scorned of all – remained firmly opposed to Yhombi-Opango's presidency. In relatively short order, Sassou Nguesso and Thystère-Tchicaya formed an anti-Yhombi-Opango coalition. Indeed, the coalition's control over state organs was so strong that it removed Yhombi-Opango by legal means: a *coup d'etat juridique*, executed with neither fatalities nor weapons. The pretense was remarkably thin. During a meeting of the PCT Central Committee on February 5, 1979 – security for which was provided by the national army, loyal to Sassou Nguesso, rather than Yhombi-Opango's personal guard – Thystère-Tchicaya employed a series of procedural motions to force Yhombi-Opango to transfer administrative authority from the *Comité Militaire* to the Central Committee. And unbeknownst to Yhombi-Opango, Sassou Nguesso and Thystère-Tchicaya had carefully orchestrated the presidential vote that would follow: During the first round Thystère-Tchicaya and Sassou Nguesso would split votes, leaving them in second and third position, respectively, behind Yhombi-Opango; in the second round Thystère-Tchicaya transferred his votes to Sassou Nguesso, who, after all, controlled the military. After two years of conspiracies, Sassou Nguesso completed his rise to power. And Owando lost its second consecutive president.

2.2 Sassou Nguesso I: 1979-1992

Sassou Nguesso was, in a very real sense, a first among equals. For notwithstanding his control over the military, his ascension was due largely to those around him. Pierre Anga, Justin Lekoundzou, and Florent Ntsiba were all central to the Ngouabi assassination; Thystère-Tchicaya provided the

public face for the *coup d'état juridique* of 5 February 1979. Although Sassou Nguesso emerged as president, he inherited a powerful, potentially threatening set of elites. Hence Sassou Nguesso inaugurated his ascension by mounting a sustained effort to loosen these constraints. He sought, in short, to consolidate his personal authority by undermining the most threatening of the PCT old guard. Indeed, having just seized power through a series of *coups d'état* himself, he was acutely aware of the risks posed by powerful elites.

2.2.1 Consolidation

This effort had at least four components. First, Sassou Nguesso sought to eliminate elites who could potentially challenge his authority. The members of the *Comité Militaire du Parti*, each of whom occupied sensitive positions in the army, were the first targets. Sassou Nguesso deftly forged a series of alliances that enabled him to immediately dismiss roughly half of its 11 members. He started, unsurprisingly, with Yhombi-Opango. For Yhombi-Opango enjoyed the loyalty of a significant share of PCT members and rivaled Sassou Nguesso's influence in the military. Sassou Nguesso thought better of making Yhombi-Opango a martyr; he was incarcerated instead, indeed remained so until the National Conference of 1991.

Now directly responsible for the demise of two Owando presidents, Sassou Nguesso was loathed by Owando's sons and daughters. Unfortunately for Sassou Nguesso, of the nine remaining members of the *Comité Militaire du Parti*, three were from Owando – including Anga – more than any other locale. Since the Owando natives formed a natural alliance, Sassou Nguesso had little difficulty enlisting the other six members to support this new found of purges. While most were simply retired, Anga was incarcerated. Released in 1985, rumors continued to circulate around Brazzaville that Anga was planning a *coup d'état*. Hence in July 1988 Sassou Nguesso sent an entire battalion to hunt him – some 300 soldiers – led by Jean-Marie Michel Mokoko, the military chief of staff. Mokoko located Anga outside Owando, where for 30 minutes Anga defended himself, a machine gun in each

hand.

With Owando natives removed, in 1980 Sassou Nguesso was left with four powerful members of the military elite: Raymond Damase Ngollo, chief of staff of the military since 1975; Louis-Sylvain Goma, prime minister since 1975 and chief of staff of the military before that; Francois Xavier Katali, Interior minister since 1977 and military commander of Pointe-Noire before that; and Florent Ntsiba, Sassou Nguesso's chief of staff while Defense minister and implicated in Ngouabi's assassination, Yhombi-Opango's fall, and Anga's incarceration. Ngollo and Goma occupied the more sensitive military positions, so they were safe. Ntsiba and Katali were powerful, but more vulnerable. Sassou Nguesso targeted them next.

Ntisba's exceptional loyalty to Sassou Nguesso gave him a reprieve. Accusations against him would come only in 1983, for "ideological inconsistency." And his previous service to Sassou Nguesso also benefited him in another way: His removal from the government was brief, less than two years. Thystère-Tchicaya was less fortunate. He was accused of masterminding a pair of Brazzaville bombings in early 1982, which together killed nine. Televised on national television in 1986, the trial, just like the Soviet show trials on which it was modeled, was entirely farcical. Without evidence linking Thystère-Tchicaya to the bombings, government prosecutors could claim only that he was insufficiently wedded to the socialist cause. This was little matter, of course. He was convicted and sentenced to five years of forced labor [130]. Katali was less fortunate. Although he occupied mid-level ministerial portfolios until his death and ascended steadily through the officer corps, Katali was murdered in 1987. In Congo the standard mode of political assassination is the *assiette Roumaine*, which was Katali's fate as well. A simple form of food poisoning, the *assiette Roumaine* is less bloody and often less incriminating than murder.

Goma and Damase Ngollo were the only members of the *Comité Militaire* to survive successive purges, due largely to their seniority atop the military apparatus. Indeed, Goma and Damase Ngollo would soon become the country's third and fourth generals, joining Yhombi-Opango and

Sassou Nguesso. Their positions, in fact, were even more distinctive: Yhombi-Opango and Sassou Nguesso, after all, had appointed themselves generals. Some elites, in short, are simply too powerful to dismiss. Hence the second component of Sassou Nguesso's effort to consolidate his authority atop the PCT: Sassou Nguesso would dilute the power of the senior military officer corps by gradually expanding it. He made four important additions. First, since Damase Ngollo was appointed military chief of staff in 1975, by 1981 he was due for reappointment. After a two-year relief, Sassou Nguesso gave Damase Ngollo a less sensitive position in his 1984 government: Minister of Administration and Local Government. His replacement was Emmanuel Elenga, who was distinctive only for his origins. A Cuvette native, Elenga was born just outside Oyo, Sassou Nguesso's home village; this, as Chapter 3 makes clear, was the beginning of a recurrent theme in Sassou Nguesso's military recruitment.[8] Elenga too would be relieved after a six year term atop the military apparatus. His replacement was Jean-Marie Michel Mokoko, who was responsible for locating Anga; Mokoko, like Elenga before him, was born in Mossaka, Cuvette, some 55 miles from Oyo.

The next two major major expansions to the senior officer corps were non-Cuvette natives, though still from the North. Gilbert Mokoki was named *directeur central du renseignement militaire*, central director of military intelligence, in 1981. A native of Likouala, he would hold a series of important posts until 1991. Emmanuel Ngouélondélé, from Gamboma, Plateaux, some two hours from Oyo, was perhaps even more important. An assistant to Sassou Nguesso between 1976 and 1979, when he was Defense Minister, Ngouélondélé served as Sassou Nguesso's *directeur général des services spćiaux*, his director general of special services, a position as sensitive as it is ambiguous. In practice, Ngouélondélé effectively presided over the country's domestic intelligence gathering service and secret police; he was, in short, among the most important elites in the government. He soon became Congo's fifth general.

Although the Plateaux region is geographically near Cuvette – and still part of the conventional

[8]Verify Elenga's native village and travel time.

North – it is further from Oyo than Sassou Nguesso would prefer. Hence Sassou Nguesso sought to ensure Ngouélondélé's loyalty in another way: marriage, representing the third component of Sassou Nguesso's efforts to consolidate his personal authority. This marriage strategy is somewhat complicated; it obviously requires appropriately aged children, and young love sometimes intervenes. Born in 1943, Sassou Nguesso assumed power at the remarkable age of 36; his eldest child, Edith Lucie, was born in 1964. Accordingly, the marriage strategy debuted in 1988, when Edgar, among Sassou Nguesso's favorite nephews, married Michèle, Ngouélondélé's daughter. Two years later Sassou Nguesso's eldest daughter, Ninelle, was engaged to Hugues, Ngouélondélé's eldest son. The chief marriage prize, however, occurred on January 3, 1990, when Edith Lucie married Omar Bongo Ondimba, Gabon's ruler since 1967. Bongo had ruled Gabon for virtually Edith's entire life. Though eight years his junior, Sassou Nguesso became father-in-law to the Gabonese president, a relation that would prove vital in 1997, when Sassou Nguesso attempted to reclaim Brazzaville by force.

Sassou Nguesso evidently took great care in populating his senior officer corps. His ministerial strategy, the fourth component of his consolidation effort, was more straightforward. The ministerial corps is somewhat less threatening than the officer corps; though affluent, civilian ministers generally lack direct access to arms, the stuff of *coups d'état*. Sassou Nguesso populated his first government, in 1979, by placating the longer serving members of the 1977 government. Indeed, of the 15 ministers in Yhombi-Opango's government fully seven returned for Sassou Nguesso's first government in 1979,[9] and six – or over one-third of Yhombi-Opango's ministerial corps – remained until 1984. Sassou Nguesso inherited a relatively strong set of elites, and he required their support.

Once Sassou Nguesso selected his first government, he made a habit of rotating government ministers with stunning frequency. Figure 2.1 presents the number of consecutive governments in which

[9]Yhombi-Opango's government had 16 ministers including Sassou Nguesso, who oversaw the defense portfolio.

Sassou Nguesso's ministers served. Of the 42 ministers who served during Sassou Nguesso's first reign, fully 23 served in but one or two governments before being replaced. Moreover, the determinants of ministerial tenure are strikingly difficult to predict. Northerners were not statistically more likely than southerners to enjoy longer tenures, Cuvette natives no more likely than other regionals, military officers no more likely than civilians, and Ngouabi ministers no more likely than Sassou Nguesso's original appointees. For the apparent capriciousness of ministerial tenure, Sassou Nguesso displayed a marked preference for northerners when filling the regime's most critical ministerial portfolios, and in particular for natives of Oyo's environs.

2.2.2 Economic Context

In the aftermath of World War II, France was desperate for low cost energy. Charles de Gaulle's government thus treated Congo's oil reserves as a state secret. It constructed a refinery for Congolese oil outside Paris and then, after signing a first contract with Alfred Raoul's government in 1968, recruited several young Congolese students, all of whom studied geology in Paris, to manage it. The young Congolese employees were denied access to French geological maps, which underscored size of Congo's reserves.[10]

Sassou Nguesso's ascension coincided with rises in both global oil prices and Congolese oil production. Indeed, between just 1978 and 1983 Congo's oil production doubled, from 50,000 barrels per day to 100,000 [169]. Sassou Nguesso sought immediately to exploit this. In 1979 he demanded an immediate advance on future production to fund his first Five Year Plan, an ambitious development project that, he claimed, would "break the dependence" on France and "reconquer the nation" [77, 162]. The loan was so large that, by 1980, Congo's debt was larger than its national output, and its debt per capita was Africa's highest. Sassou Nguesso used the loan to expand the country's already bloated civil service – it had inherited a government apparatus designed to govern all of France

[10] Interview with Benjamin Moutsila,

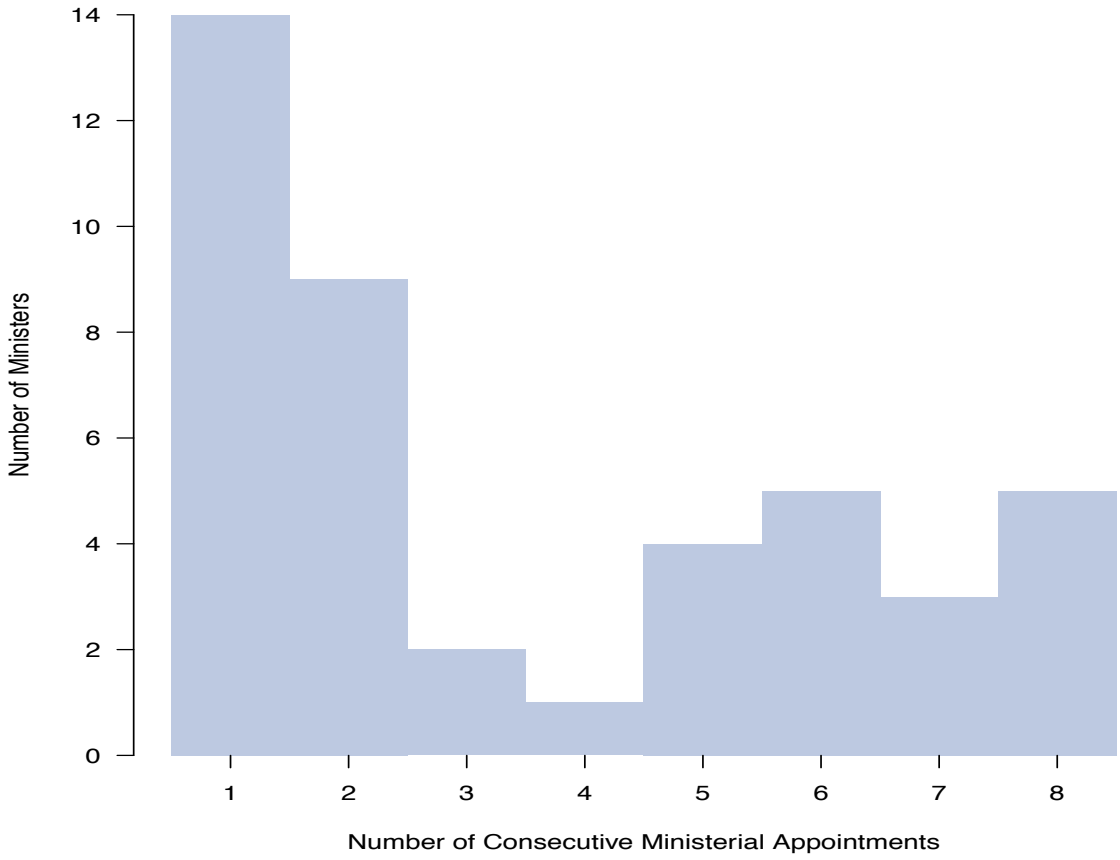

Figure 2.1: Ministerial Duration during Sassou Nguesso's first reign. The overwhelming majority of ministers served but one or two consecutive terms in Sassou Nguesso's government. Note that Sassou Nguesso announced a new government roughly every year.

Equatorial Africa – and finance a range of economically inefficient projects [162]. After peaking in 1981, however, global oil prices declined steadily until 1985. With total debt of some $2.4 billion, Sassou Nguesso was unable to both service it and pay the state bureaucracy.

Since the CFA Franc was both shared with Gabon and fixed to the French Franc, Sassou Nguesso was unable solve the financial shortfall by simply printing money. He turned first to the International Monetary Fund, which required both political liberalization and greater financial transparency in exchange for loans. Unwilling, Sassou Nguesso turned instead to Elf, which provided a

new loans on future oil production in exchange for new oil concessions at even lower prices [144]. Whereas most governments negotiated royalty rates of roughly 33%, Sassou Nguesso accepted but 17%. By 1987 Congo had become the most heavily indebted country per capita in the world; by 1990 its oil revenues had been spoken for until 1994; and by 1992 its total debt had reached some $5 billion [85, 124].

Notwithstanding his considerable political problems at home, Sassou Nguesso's relationship with Elf proved extraordinarily lucrative. Elf routinely sold Congolese oil with an average mark-up of $0.20 per barrel, and then placed $0.40 per barrel into Liechtenstein-based trusts in Elf's name. These funds were then transferred to offshore accounts held by Sassou Nguesso. These *abonnements* – or subscriptions, as they were euphemistically known – were worth roughly $20 million per year in the 1980s. Indeed, between just 1989 and 1992, Elf transferred some $64.8 million to Congo's leadership. Elf also routinely provided "bonuses" as gestures of goodwill. Jacques Sigolet, in charge of Elf's African subsidiaries between 1978 and 1985, admitted to "several" payments during the period of between $3 and $5 million. Elf intended one payment as gratitude for introducing the company to José Eduardo dos Santos, a relationship that would prove critical in 1997 [77]. Ostensibly a Marxist dictator, Sassou Nguesso was so tethered to Elf – indeed, he owed the company his personal fortune, just as Congo owed it virtually all of its oil revenues for the next years – that Le Floch-Prigent acknowledged in 1996 that he virtually controlled the country's politics. Indeed, so fond of Sassou Nguesso were French Gaullists that Prime Minister Jacques Chirac said this to Sassou Nguesso before a host of African presidents in 1987:

> French-Congolese cooperation is exemplary. ...My contact with you has taught me so much. Your knowledge of Africa, of its men and its realities, the perspicacity of your analyses, your dignity, the wisdom of your judgments have convinced me that Congo and Africa could hardly be better represented [183].

In July 1989 the PCT's fourth party congress renewed Sassou Nguesso's term atop the party apparatus, and with it the state. But Sassou Nguesso was slowly losing control. In 1988 the public caught wind of a plan to import toxic waste for burial, which promised to enrich Sassou Nguesso and aides still further [49]. Rising food prices and stagnant incomes rendered food scarce in Brazzaville's poorer neighborhoods, which the government's inability to pay civil services salaries did nothing to alleviate [20, 192]. Sassou Nguesso was also unable to summon international support. In November the Berlin Wall came down, and the following June French President Francois Mitterand, before 22 African presidents at La Baule, declared that

> Democracy is a universal principle. ...Representative political systems, a free press, independent judiciary, the end of censorship. ...That is the direction we must take. ...I speak to you as a citizen of the world, to other citizens of the world: The path of liberty on which you will advance is also the path of development.

French aid, Mitterand announced, would henceforth be tied to democratization. By the end of June the PCT Central Committee accepted modest political liberalization but rejected the National Conference model that was pioneered in Benin in February 1989 and soon removed Mathieu Kérékou.

2.2.3 The Final Days

The Congolese labor unions constituted one of the regime's pillars. By controlling access to urban employment, labor union support largely ensured that, in times of economic crisis, urban workers remained in factories and off the streets. The secretary general of the *Confédération Syndicale Congolaise*, the country's only labor union, was thus a critical position. The PCT leadership appointed Jean-Michel Bokamba-Yangouma to the post in 1974; reappointed three times, Bokamba-Yangouma nonetheless represented the PCT old guard Sassou Nguesso inherited upon his ascension. Bokamba-Yangouma's regard for Sassou Nguesso declined dramatically following his 1989

reappointment. For on 19 September 1989 his daughter boarded UTA flight 772 from Brazzaville to Paris; according to subsequent French judicial proceedings, Colonel Muammar al-Gaddafi's government placed a bomb, packaged in a dark gray Samsonite suitcase, just prior to departing Brazzaville, which was timed to explode in Niger airspace. The apparent motive: the French government resisted Libya's efforts to claim part of Chad's northern border between 1978 and 1987. Bokamba-Yangouma, however, believed Sassou Nguesso was at least partially complicit. Although several other Congolese elites had family who had registered for the flight, they opted not to travel on the day of the flight. Bokamba-Yangouma assumed they had been informed of the impending explosion; he had not [182]. In September 1990, then, a year following his daughter's death and as frustration for the regime mounted, Bokamba-Yangouma helped coordinate a series of labor strikes – including the communications, oil, health, education, industrial, and transportation sectors – that brought Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire to a halt.

Perhaps Sassou Nguesso could have survived the mass protests if he repressed them. Yet he simultaneously lost military support; General Jean-Marie Michel Mokoko, military chief of staff since 1987, ordered his subordinates to ignore commands from the PCT political apparatus, implicitly referring to Sassou Nguesso himself. Mokoko then proceeded to disarm the popular militias that cowed Brazzaville's residents into submission [20]. For Mokoko was a towering figure in Congolese military circles. A graduate of Saint-Cyr, the premier French military academy, he was also a darling among French conservatives, indeed their preference as Sassou Nguesso's successor. Sassou Nguesso distrusted Mokoko; most Congolese citizens believe Sassou Nguesso attempted to poison him in 1990 [192].

These two betrayals – combined with the popular uprisings that were both cause and consequence – constituted a tipping point. Once other elites believed the regime was likely to fall, they judged their political futures better served by embracing democracy. Sassou Nguesso made them fortunes; but keeping their fortunes required embracing democracy. The most high profile defec-

tions came in late 1990 and early 1991. In November 1990 Ange Edouard Poungui and Alphonse Soucklaty Poaty resigned from the PCT; Poungui served as Sassou Nguesso's prime minister from 1984 until 1989 and was married to one of his nieces, while Soucklaty Poaty was Sassou Nguesso's prime minister since 1989 and a minister since 1984. Even Emmanuel Ngouélondélé defected to the opposition, supplying weapons as Sassou Nguesso clung to power. Upon Lissouba's election to the presidency, Ngouélondélé was appointed General of the Congolese Armed Forces and became one of Lissouba's most trusted advisors.

Sassou Nguesso sought to stem the tide by increasing the civil service from roughly 70, 000 to 83, 000; he increased the pay scale for public employees in December 1990 and again in January 1991. Although he nearly doubled the bankrupt government's wage bill, by then it was too late [47]. Agreed to by Sassou Nguesso on February 4 and convened on February 25, the National Conference quickly declared itself sovereign, effectively ending Sassou Nguesso's run as head of state. As prime minister, the 11, 000 strong delegation elected André Milongo, an alum of the *École Nationale d'Administration*,[11] member of the board of governors of the African Development Bank, executive director at the World Bank, and regarded as thoroughly incorruptible. Sassou Nguesso was publicly charged with a series of political assassinations: Ngoaubi, Massamba-Débat, and Biayenda, most notably. Most delegates favored a public trial and certain incarceration, a fate he narrowly avoided thanks to the military leaders – Mokoko, Damase Ngollo, and Ngouélondélé – who guaranteed the Conference's security. Unswayed, Sassou Nguesso's public response was to conflate his crimes with those of his predecessors – never mind that his were more voluminous and more grotesque – and then, with feigned selflessness and humility, accept personal responsibility for the crimes of all. His speech:

> President Youlou had no time to experiment with the single party system. President

[11] The *École Nationale d'Administration* is considered a training ground for the senior reaches of the French civil service.

> Massamba-Débat, who directed the first single party organization, the *Mouvement National de la Révolution* is no more. Equally Commandant Marien Ngouabi, who founded the *Parti Congolais du Travail*. President Yhombi-Opango, who pursued the experience with the party committee, is no longer active in political matters. I am thus alone to assume the sins of preceding generations, and assume them I do, in the name of our collective responsibility and my individual responsibility, in the name of all the country's directors who are no more .... I assume, for us all, our entire past, this entire common history, in its errors and its merits. I say to our people that, if grave errors have been committed, the will to do good has always guided us.[12]

"*J'assume*," Sassou Nguesso declared, "I assume them." With that, Sassou Nguesso attempted to make the best of his humiliation.

As late as November 1991, Sassou Nguesso held out hope for survival. Encouraged by the World Bank – who claimed that Congo received less from its oil revenues than most any other country in the world – André Milongo and the National Conference delegates charged Arthur Andersen with auditing Elf's Congo subsidiary and its contracts with the government. The audit – and the choice of an American firm to undertake it – so enraged Elf that its director of African affairs, André Tarallo, sought to arm Sassou Nguesso's final effort to retain power by force. From an internal Elf memo:

> April 24, 1991. Summary of meeting with Mr. Tarallo. B. ...just saw Sassou and suggested that he execute the opponents that will be indicated to him. Sassou has just received the armored weaponry purchased for him by way of M'Baye, [the Gabonese intelligence chief]. Aerial transport from Geneva to Libreville, then Libreville-Brazza [182].

[12] Yengo [192], 92.

The "B" referred to is almost certainly Paul Barril, whose firm SECRETS de Barril reportedly sent four mercenaries to assist Sassou Nguesso in March 1991. From another Elf internal memo:

> Mokoko returned to Brazza November 26. Sassou will try to persuade him to act. Bongo, after his return on the 25, called Sassou to urge the same thing. The November 24 interview at André Tarallo's residence didn't attain its objective. Mokoko remains legal but won't undertake anything ...unless the transitional government doesn't keep its promises. ...A team of mercenaries is ready to act from Libreville [182].

The Arthur Andersen audit did not go well:

> He came and said he had to stop the audit: he and his family were being threatened. He was trembling, right in front of me. He had never been threatened like that in his life [162].

Several Sassou Nguesso loyalists attempted a *coup d'état* on January 15, 1992, but Mokoko refused to back it.

Sassou Nguesso's humiliation was completed with the presidential election of August 1992, the first – and to date the only – genuinely fair election in Congo's history. Pascal Lissouba won nearly 36% of the vote, dominating the more populous southern regions: Kouilou, Niari, Bouenza, and Lékoumou; Bernard Kolélas received just over 20%, claiming Pool and parts of Lissouba's stronghold in the south. Sassou Nguesso finished a distant third, garnering 17%, drawn exclusively from Cuvette and its immediate environs. This result, in part, was a measure of the country's demographics; the southern regions are far more populous than their northern counterparts, rendering electoral victory for any northern politician virtually impossible. Yet it was also a reflection of just how reviled Sassou Nguesso was. In the second round, Sassou Nguesso cast his lot with the clear frontrunner, an endorsement that likely did more for Sassou Nguesso than for Lissouba. Lissouba's victory was crushing: he garnered more than 61% of the vote. His party claimed 39 of the National

Assembly's 125 seats in the June parliamentary elections, well ahead of the 29 seats won by Kolélas' MCDDI and the 18 won by Sassou Nguesso's PCT.

2.3 The Lissouba Interlude: 1992-1997

Lissouba was far from a neophyte. Born in 1931, he received a doctorate in agricultural engineering from the Sorbonne, in Paris, the first Congolese citizen to do so. Lissouba received his first major government post in Massamba-Débat's 1963 government, known as "the government of technocrats," and occupied both the agriculture and prime minister portfolios until 1966. He served briefly in Ngouabi's 1968 government, was incarcerated several times in the 1970s, and then took refuge at UNESCO between 1980 and 1990.

2.3.1 Lissouba, Elf, and the Politics of National Unity

Lissouba confronted his first crisis almost immediately. Reflecting Sassou Nguesso's minor role in his victory, Lissouba offered the PCT three ministerial portfolios in his first government; Sassou Nguesso demanded many more, in addition to the presidency of the National Assembly. Lissouba waffled, and on September 30 – some 45 days after endorsing Lissouba's bid for president – Sassou Nguesso promulgated a new alliance with Bernard Kolélas. Together, the PCT and MCDDI constituted a parliamentary majority. And despite Sassou Nguesso's humiliation at the National Conference and Lissouba's crushing victory, a PCT deputy was elected the National Assembly's president [47]. Emboldened, the MCDDI-PCT spent the next month demanding that Lissouba appoint a prime minister from the MCDDI-PCT coalition, culminating in a successful "no confidence" vote against Lissouba's first government on October 31, never mind Lissouba was inaugurated on August 31 and his government appointed on September 8. In response, Lissouba dissolved the National Assembly on November 17 and called for new elections in June 1993.

Congo's economic position remained untenable. Unable to pay civil service salaries – and equally unable to dismiss the public labor force – Lissouba turned to Elf, as Sassou Nguesso had so often before. With oil proceeds now spoken for until 2001 [182], in February 1993 Lissouba requested a new oil-backed loan of some $300 million. This time Elf refused, however, on the personal insistence of its president Loïk Le Floch-Prigent. The decision was widely interpreted – by Lissouba and Sassou Nguesso alike – as evidence of Elf's preference for Sassou Nguesso [47]. Le Floch-Prigent later conceded as much:

> [I did so for] reasons of political stability of Congo, for if if Mr. Lissouba won an absolute majority [in the elections], there would be an ethnic war. ...Democracy in Congo is ethnic [77].

Le Floch-Prigent – indeed, the French government – preferred Sassou Nguesso's autocracy, for they believed it was the only way to hold the country together. Spurned by Elf, Lissouba turned to Occidental Petroleum, an American company with a warm relationship with Muammar al-Gaddafi. For a $150 million – virtually all of which went to pay civil service salaries – Lissouba agreed to sell Congo's share of oil production for the next decade for $3 per barrel, only 10% of the market price. Le Floch-Prigent was so infuriated that an American company obtained an entry into the Congolese market that he advised the French government – which controlled the Central Bank – to hold up payment. Elf later purchased the Oxy loan altogether [77], though by then Lissouba had also welcomed Chevron and Exxon too [47].

Although Lissouba's core constituency was based almost exclusively in the southern regions, his politics were strikingly balanced. Whereas the general corps – by far the most sensitive governmental positions – under the previous PCT governments was dominated by northerners, Lissouba's appointees were distributed evenly across regions. Among the more notable of his general appointments: Emmanuel Elenga, chief of staff of the military in the 1980s; Paul Mbot, head of the national

police between 1985 and 1992; and Raymond Damase Ngollo, appointed general in the 1980s and promoted again in 1993. Ngouélondélé and Jean-Marie Michel Mokoko quickly emerged as two of Lissouba's most trusted military advisors. Lissouba's first military chief of staff, Claude Emmanuel Eta Onka, was from Plateaux, adjacent to Sassou Nguesso's native Cuvette. Although Lissouba owed his electoral victory to southerners, he partly entrusted the country's security to northerners.

Notwithstanding his relatively even handed appointments, Lissouba was not exactly worthy of the honor and trust accorded him. For Lissouba happily maintained the aspects of the Elf system that served his financial interests. Most notably: Elf's habit of providing "bonus payments" in exchange for privileged access to Congolese crude supplies. In 2003 a group of 37 former senior executives of Elf were tried in French courts for public corruption; André Tarallo, former president of Elf Congo and known within the company as "Mister Africa," testified that Lissouba received payments of $10 and $25 million. He soon purchased a *hotel très particulier*, an exceptionally resplendent mansion, in Paris's 17th arrondissement, the exceedingly affluent neighborhood of Auteil. Lissouba threatened a lawsuit for defamy when the French press publicized it; of course, it never came.[13]

2.3.2 Sassou Nguesso Plots in Paris

Elf coordinated its efforts against the Lissouba government with Sassou Nguesso. For although virtually all Congolese observers thought Sassou Nguesso's political career over, after 1993 Sassou Nguesso quietly spent far more time cultivating support in Paris, an effort made far easier by Jacques Chirac's victory in the 1995 presidential elections. Sassou Nguesso's effort was sustained by a personal "embassy" at 33 Avenue Montaigne, located in the eighth arrondissement just two blocks south of the Élysée Palace. The office boasted an oil representative, a diplomatic representative, a military attaché, and a bevy of assistants, all of whom made a variety of promises to their French

[13]Interview with Henrik Lindell.

counterparts about Sassou Nguesso's policies upon his return. Sassou Nguesso's diplomatic agents would all occupy central positions following the 1997 civil war: Ambroise Noumazalaye, Mathias Dzon, Rodolphe Adada, Anatole Kondo, Pierre Moussa, Pierre Oba, and Alain Akouala Atipault [177, 192].

In retrospect, this was the first sign that Sassou Nguesso was plotting his political rehabilitation. There were at least three others. Sassou Nguesso retained the core of his former *Garde Présidentielle* and the Para-Trooper Group, which became his personal militia. Dubbed Cobras – short for *Combattants de Brazzaville*, or Brazzaville fighters – they trained in the Tsambitso forests outside Oyo. A contingent was occasionally sent to the Likouala region, adjacent to Democratic Republic of Congo, where they were trained by the same French military contingent that trained Juvenal Habyarimana's Hutu soldiers following the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Sassou Nguesso armed his Cobra militia in a variety of ways. In 1994 he engineered a massive arms theft from the *École Nationale des Sous-Officiers* near Gamboma, Plateaux, the largest weapons cache near Sassou Nguesso's native Cuvette region. This was the second such theft in four months, and it was followed by massive defections of northern soldiers from the Congolese military. The weapons were stored in both Oyo and at Jean-Marie Tassoua's home in northern Brazzaville; Tassoua would later serve as Cobra chief of staff [177]. Tassoua also coordinated a series of arms purchases through Jean-Yves Ollivier, an Algerian born commodities trader who served as Chirac's advisor on African affairs in the 1980s and 1990s. These contacts culminated with a 25 ton shipment from Bourget to Sassou Nguesso, by way of Bongo's Gabon. The date of the shipment: June 3, 1997, two days before the civil war. Indeed, Sassou Nguesso so relied on Ollivier that he later described him as one of only two "true friends" during his Paris exile [183].

Sassou Nguesso required a propaganda apparatus. In this, too, the French government was complicit. In 1995 Sassou Nguesso asked Jean François Probst, then advisor for African affairs to Prime

Minister Alain Juppé, for a Frenchman who could lead his propaganda apparatus once in power.[14] Probst proposed Jean-Paul Pigasse, who in 1997 would found *Les Dépeches de Brazzaville*, *Dispatches from Brazzaville*, a mouthpiece for the government. Congo's only daily newspaper, it wields considerable influence; Pigasse continues to edit articles for content. A sample of its journalism, just following a Paris court's finding in June 2007 that Sassou Nguesso's properties in France were inconsistent with his official salary:

> The nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that ceaselessly attack African leaders are but the docile, servile, and occult instruments of Western governments, whose only goal is to enslave Africa once again. ...At the center of this drama are NGOs – Transparency international, Survie, Sherpa, and Global Witness – who have aimed, for years and by any means necessary, to destabilize the two Congos, Gabon, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Sudan, the Central African Republic, and Chad.[15]

Transparency International and Global Witness are both widely known international NGOs; Survie is a French NGO that publicizes French misadventures in Africa, presided over by Francois Verschave until his death; founded by a French lawyer, Sherpa is now directed by a Cameroonian women. Pigasse's dispatch conveniently omitted the role of the *Fédération des Congolais de la Diaspora*, a network of Congolese expatriates in Paris who accept enormous risk to publicize the crimes of Sassou Nguesso's government.[16] Many of them have received death threats for their trouble, unable to return to Congo.

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[14] *La Lettre du Continent*, 30 October 1997.

[15] `http://www.connectionivoirienne.net/?p=45006&cpage=1`.

[16] Vershave was the second president of Survie; he was also one of the founders. Odile Bitedi Tobner, wife of Mongo Beti, is currently the president. She is Cameroonian. Sherpa was created by a French lawyer; was previously SG of FIDH. And also FCD. In September 2007 the lawsuit was terminated by the government. Then TI took up the complaint after the French government ended the investigation. The French government tried to block it again, and then TI went to Cour de Cassation. The two judges were named in December and we are still awaiting the results. Houses of: Djombo, Claude Ntsilou, Yoka,

The final signal of Sassou Nguesso's intention to reclaim power was more furtive, and considerably more curious. In 1995 Sassou Nguesso decided to found his very own freemasonry lodge. It was a curious decision, of course, since Sassou Nguesso was not a freemason. Indeed, neophyte masons are generally not leading candidates to found new lodges. Fortunately for Sassou Nguesso, he enjoyed a political alliance with fellow autocrat Abdou Diouf, who ruled Senegal from 1980 until 2000 and was a Master Mason in Dakar's GLF outfit; Bongo, his son-in-law in Gabon, was a freemason as well, and his lodge had long provided a forum where Gabonese elites negotiated lower prices for Elf, the French oil company, in exchange for financial payments. By October 1997 Sassou Nguesso had ascended, with remarkably alacrity, to Master Mason. The first initiates in his new *Grande Loge du Congo* (GLC) were his closest political allies. Each would later occupy a central role in Brazzaville's new government: Jean Dominique Okemba, Sassou Nguesso's nephew and chief of presidential security; General Jean Francois Ndenguet, chief of the national police force and later accused of war crimes; Hugues Ngouélondélé, Sassou Nguesso's son-in-law and Brazzaville's mayor since 2003; and General Gilbert Mokoki, commander of the ground army until 2002 and then the national gendarmerie.

2.4 The War of 5 June 1997

There were but two ways Sassou Nguesso could return to power. Although a presidential election was scheduled for July 27, 1997, Congo's demographics and political institutions combined to render a Sassou Nguesso electoral victory nearly impossible [183]. For although Lissouba and Kolélas could conceivably split the massive southern vote in the first round, Sassou Nguesso would have to face one of them in the second round run-off. And with the overwhelming majority of Congo's population concentrated in the south, Sassou Nguesso stood little chance of defeating either Lissouba or Kolélas. Of course, as the 1992 election made clear, the southern population was so large that Lis-

souba and Kolélas could split it and still garner a higher percentage than Sassou Nguesso. If Sassou Nguesso sought to return to power, he required an alternative to the electoral process.

Since the perquisites of power in Congo rest primarily on oil exports, Sassou Nguesso had to find some pretext for civil war that would avoid international condemnation. The plan was straightforward. On May 10, 1997, Sassou Nguesso staged a campaign rally in Owando – some 60 miles north of Oyo and home to Ngouabi, Yhombi-Opango, and Anga, each of whose downfall Sassou Nguesso orchestrated years earlier – during which he would enter the city in the honored fashion of traditional chiefs: seated on a raised throne, carried by a retinue of young men. Owando residents would inevitably object, perhaps violently given their antipathy for Sassou Nguesso, at which point his guards would open fire. In the event, two members of Sassou Nguesso's Cobra militia killed some 16 people, with 4,000 others fleeing Owando from the violence [183, 192, 131].

Accused of several murders, the two Cobra militants took refuge in Mpila, Sassou Nguesso's Brazzaville compound. At roughly 6.00am on June 5, 1997, Lissouba executed the arrest warrant by sending five armored vehicles to Mpila. Forewarned by Martin Mberi, who was removed from Lissouba's government in September 1997, Sassou Nguesso's Cobras responded by opening fire, forcing the government out of the northern parts of Brazzaville. Despite the Lissouba government's best efforts to attain a ceasefire on June 7, Sassou Nguesso would have none of it. He had his pretext, and the ensuing destruction of the war for Brazzaville he would simply regard as collateral, a small sacrifice for the perquisites of power. On June 9 Sassou Nguesso's Cobras expanded the war to Brazzaville's southern and western quarters, Bacongo and Makélékélé, both Lissouba strongholds.

French authorities were, of course, aware of all this. And although the Chirac government supported Sassou Nguesso, Elf required an insurance policy. It thus supported both sides. In early 1997 Tarallo advised Lissouba "you need a war chest" [77]. According to Lissouba's testimony during the 2003 Elf trial, Tarallo and Sigolet introduced him to Jacques Monsieur, a Belgian arms trafficker and money launderer. Orders were placed with Monsieur for weapons such as helicopter gunships to-

talling $61.5 million and the payments were routed through the Paris branch of FIBA, partly owned by Elf. The indictment records that the arms were "paid for with oil": that is, with funds siphoned-off from Congo's oil revenues and paid into the FIBA account of the Congolese Ministry of Finance. From May to September 1997, a total of around $52 million (FF303 million) entered the account and between $25 and $30 million was paid out for arms. In addition, Sigolet admits to making arrangements for a new oil-backed loan for $50 million for Lissouba, routed through an offshore company called Darrow.

Bernard Kolélas, then mayor of Brazzaville, had no particular affection for Lissouba or Sassou Nguesso. His Ninja militia thus abstained through August, instead erecting a series of checkpoints that controlled entry into the Bacongo and Makélékélé neighborhoods, where the overwhelming majority of his supporters lived. As Lissouba's fortunes improved in August,[17] Kolélas opted to cast his lot with him. In early September Kolélas accepted Lissouba's invitation to become prime minister. The Ninja militia joined Lissouba's forces, giving the democratically elected government full control of the southern regions. For his part, Sassou Nguesso announced control of the northern regions on September 8, 1997, supported by a range of mercenaries and foreign soldiers: Mobutu's former presidential guard, Chadian soldiers, the former Rwandan Hutu militia, and even French air support [181, 182].

"The War of 5 June," as Congolese now call it, had disastrous consequences for the civilian population. The war was fought almost exclusively in Brazzaville; the primary front was the city center itself, and virtually the entire area was destroyed: restaurants, office buildings, hotels. By the country's 50th anniversary of independence, celebrated in 2010, the damage remained obvious. Of course, the location of the battle front did little to prevent the warring militias from targeting Brazzaville's residential areas. The city's northern regions, Sassou Nguesso's core constituency, had been bombed

[17] Interview with Pierre Mboungou Mboungou, . See also Yengo [192].

so thoroughly that, by October 1, 1997, they were completely empty.[18] Pointe-Noire went virtually untouched, for Brazzaville was worth little without it.

Despite the stalemate that opened the war, by September Sassou Nguesso's Cobras were apparently on the verge of defeat. Sassou Nguesso's fortunes quickly changed in early October. With Brazzaville's southern neighborhoods – Bacongo and Makélékélé – largely peaceful and populated, French president Jacques Chirac asked José Eduardo dos Santos, his Angolan counterpart and longtime financial ally, to intervene. The Angolan contribution proved critical: On October 13 four MIG 21 warplanes, all from the Angolan army, virtually destroyed the Presidential Palace and bombed Brazzaville's Bacongo and Makélékélé neighborhoods, both Lissouba strongholds, into submission. Overwhelmed, Lissouba's forces fled Brazzaville on October 14 and took refuge in the country's southern regions: Pool, Niari, Bouenza, Lekoumou, and Kouilou [183]. Pointe-Noire fell on October 15, with hardly a shot fired.

And thus the return of the former Marxist dictator, facilitated by French oil interests. His victory was accompanied by five days of sanctioned pillaging in Bacongo and Makélékélé, all overseen by Jean Marie Tassoua [192]. Cobra soldiers, after all, had to be paid.

[18] LSA 2132, 2 October 1997.

Part II

Social Tools of Elite Control

3

Recruitment and the Politics of Hope, 1997-2002

But as for instilling soldiers with enthusiasm, it seems to me that nothing is more effective than being able to fill human beings with hopes. ...If someone deceives often, instilling the expectation of good things, such a person ends up not being able to persuade even when he speaks of true sources of hope.

– Xenophon, *The Education of Cyrus*

Sassou Nguesso's heavily armed motorcade departed Oyo the morning of October 23, 1997, and by early afternoon entered Brazzaville in triumph. His reception in Brazzaville's northern neighborhoods – Moungali, Ouenzé, Talangaï, and Mikalou – was jubilant. Only three weeks earlier all four neighborhoods had been emptied, the targets of sustained helicopter assaults by Lissouba's Cocoye militia and Kolélas' Ninja militia. After pronouncing himself president, Sassou Nguesso suspended the Constitution of 1992, drafted by the sovereign National Conference, and appointed a new Supreme Court, which administered the presidential oath on October 25. Befitting its role in the restoration, the French government quickly signaled its support. Philippe Jaffré, Elf's president, attended a "working lunch" with Sassou Nguesso on October 26 – he brought 10 cases of Moët & Chandon as a gift[1] – and on October 27 Jacques Chirac publicly congratulated him. With Lissouba, Kolélas, and Yhombi-Opango in exile, he confronted no real domestic opposition. For a former Marxist dictator who just deposed the only democratically elected president in Congo's history, it was a remarkable showing.

Governing requires a government, and so Sassou Nguesso quickly set about populating his new regime. He did so knowing that these choices would determine which elites threatened him from within and which from without. His Paris activities afforded him a head start. His "embassy" on Avenue Montaigne ultimately provided his Ministers of Communications, Economy, Finance, Foreign Affairs, and Mines. The Cobra military leadership supplied the core of the reconstituted *Forces Armées Congolaises* and several ministers to boot. More generally, the tumult of the 1990s served as a screening device, separating the opportunists – they disparaged the PCT at the National Conference

[1] See *La Lettre du Continent*, 30 October 1997.

and styled themselves democrats – from the loyalists. But there were many other positions for which to recruit, and he had to do so quickly.

As Sassou Nguesso surveyed the landscape before him, he confronted daunting challenges. Sassou Nguesso bequeathed to Lissouba the world's most heavily indebted country per capita, its oil revenues spoken for years in advance. Lissouba only exacerbated things, for his political survival required borrowing even more to fund the bureaucracy that Sassou Nguesso dramatically expanded in 1991. With the country's external debt nearly 300% of its GDP, Congo's financial position left Sassou Nguesso beholden to the demands of Western creditors. Whatever his aspirations, Sassou Nguesso would have to reconstruct his autocracy while abiding the nominally democratic institutions – the term limits, regular elections, and numerous political parties – created by the 1991 National Conference. He would be forced to secure elite compliance without the aid of the single party regimes that buttressed his Cold War era counterparts. He would be forced to "legitimate" his seizure of power by organizing presidential elections, and then risk popular uprisings by organizing parliamentary elections. These tasks were rendered all the more difficult by his standing among the majority southern population. After 12 years of economic mismanagement and a brutal civil war that was accompanied by unrestrained pillage, he was loathed. Although he could likely guarantee electoral victory with fraud – and thus overcome his demographic disadvantage – power so secured is far more tenuous than power based on acquiescence.

More immediately, however, Sassou Nguesso faced a rebellion. Although he held Brazzaville, he was surrounded by enemies. For although Lissouba's Cocoye militia was weakened, it was not destroyed;[2] and Kolélas' Ninja militia, having entered the war only in September, was virtually intact.[3] For the French government had forbidden Sassou Nguesso from advancing beyond Nganga Lingola, a small town just west of Brazzaville. Surrounded by his enemies, Sassou Nguesso had to quickly

[2]Interview with Pierre Mboungou Mboungou, 2 August 2009.

[3]Interview with Mathys, Kolélas' former cabinet director, and Roger, a senior Ninja fighter, 14 February 2012.

secure his military victory without violating international human rights norms.

This chapter tells the story of Sassou Nguesso's rule between October 1997 and the 2002 presidential elections through the lens of his recruitment strategies. Its central argument is that Sassou Nguesso populated his regime based largely on the interests of those outside looking in. As scholars and policymakers would expect [68, 60, 29], Sassou Nguesso appointed his children, cousins, nephews, and longtime loyalists to the regime's most critical positions. He monitored these critical appointees in a variety of ways – or, more precisely, he used them to monitor each other – and compensated them handsomely for their efforts.[4] He incentivized loyal service with performance incentives. These techniques, indeed, are subjects of Chapters 4, 5, and 6. But autocratic survival requires far more than the loyalty of the most senior regime officials. It requires the acquiescence of a much broader segment of the elite population, who believe their careers best served by loyalty. In single party regimes, their support is secured by "opportunities for upward social mobility" [88, 176, 37]. In the absence of exceptionally strong single party institutions – those, for instance, that characterized the Soviet Union and PRI Mexico, and undergird Communist China, Singapore, and Malaysia [166] – autocrats search for other ways to credibly define the pool of candidates for their regime's senior positions. Akin to creating an in-group eligible for appointment, this creates a "politics of hope" that potentially induces loyalty from those elites who are included in the in-group but currently excluded from the regime's largesse.

Sassou Nguesso, this chapter argues, turned to geography. He quickly gained a reputation for recruiting almost exclusively from a 85 mile radius around Oyo, his home village. His impulse to create a well defined in-group was so strong that it trumped even previous demonstrations of loyalty, however costly. For although many veterans of his civil war effort were overrepresented in the new regime, those outside a 85 mile radius around Oyo were not. Indeed, Sassou Nguesso excluded them

[4] Most accounts of autocratic recruitment simply stress the importance of buying elites off: ensuring that their financial returns from loyalty outstrip those from a *coup d'état*; see Acemoglu, Robinson and Verdier [3], Boix and Svolik [33], Bueno de Mesquita et al. [39], and Svolik [175].

at great risk to himself. Section 3.1 presents an analytical history of the first years of the reconstruction that elucidates these dynamics. Section 3.2 explores why Sassou Nguesso was willing to accept such risk to create a geographic in-group with the aid of a game theoretic model. It suggests that the greatest effect of an in-group is on those excluded from the regime. Section 3.3 then presents a range of statistical evidence that members of the geographic in-group engaged in less anti-regime behavior *even when* they were excluded from the regime. By contrast, after termination – when elites have little chance of reappointment – membership in the in-group has had no effect on elite behavior. Section 3.3 also finds that elites respond to Sassou Nguesso's recruitment strategy in predictable ways. Most notably, those already ensconced favor in-group expansions, which reduces aggregate anti-regime behavior and renders the regime more secure still.

3.1 Reconstructing Autocracy

Sassou Nguesso declared this after taking the presidential oath:

> My thoughts go first to the innumerable victims and martyrs from the war that tyrant Pascal Lissouba provoked against the Congolese people. ...The country's ethno-regional divisions were pitted against each other at the expense of national unity. ...For some five years, a tiny minority lounged in opulence, engaged in a systematic pillaging of the state and widescale corruption. ...The denial of fundamental liberties, the terror, the most base tribalism and regionalism, the lies, the manipulation, the purchasing of consciences: all became methods of government. ...The victory of [my forces] against the forces of Lissouba must not be considered the victory of one part of the country over another, but that of all Congolese people against the old demons of division and barbarity.[5]

[5] *La Semaine Africaine*, 13 November 1997.

It was a breathtaking speech given his earlier crimes. It would become even more breathtaking as his second reign wore on.

Sassou Nguesso quickly moved to curry international support. Only four days after his return, Sassou Nguesso traveled to Luanda to sign a regional security agreement with Bongo, Dos Santos, and Kabila; they agreed to not shelter "armed rebel factions on their soil" [47]. After more conferences in Gabon and Vietnam, Sassou Nguesso returned to Paris. Accompanied by seven ministers and a bevy of aides – so many that the group was dispersed among three of the city's finest hotels[6] – Sassou Nguesso received Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, his Cooperation Minister, Jaffré, and a series of other French industrialists; he dined with Chirac at the Élysée Palace [181]. The tour was so successful that he returned to Congo with enough cash to pay civil service salaries for the first time in months.[7] The French press was considerably less enthusiastic that the country's taxpayers had funded his return to power, a claim Sassou Nguesso simply denied:

> There is no proof that France supported me. I'm waiting for someone to bring me proof. ...We decided to compete in the presidential election [of 1997]. I would have been elected with 90% of the vote.[8]

Sassou Nguesso inherited a multiparty electoral system, imposed on him by external creditors. He then dismantled it as thoroughly as he could. On January 5, 1998, Sassou Nguesso opened the *Forum national pour la réconciliation, l'unité, la démocratie et la reconstruction*, a 10 day affair modeled on the National Conference that humiliated him. Tightly choreographed, Ambroise Noumazalaye, the PCT secretary general, gave a remarkable interview a week prior to the Forum's opening:

> We go to the Forum without vengeance, to rebuild the Congo that our friends destroyed. There will be no civil *coup d'état* at the Forum. Because I consider the sovereign

[6] *La Lettre du Continent*, 1 January 1998. The delegation rented 10 vehicles from Europcar, for which the new government paid cash.

[7] *La Semaine Africaine*, 8 January 1998.

[8] *La Semaine Africaine*, 19 February 1998.

> National Conference was precisely a civil *coup d'état* against President Sassou Nguesso. We are not going to the Forum to hear more of the inanities that marked the National Conference.[9]

The Forum essentially removed the legislature's oversight authority over the president. There would be no prime minister, no legislative right to confirm presidential appointments, a seven year presidential term, and an appointed legislature until elections could be organized several years hence [192, 47]. "Since the end of the war," *La Semaine Africaine* reported, "the country's political life has been frozen with fear."[10] For Congolese citizens were virtually required to refer to Sassou Nguesso with sobriquets that, if not so insidious, would have been laughable: the Savior, Liberator, Good Shepherd, Papa Good Fortune.[11]

3.1.1 Organizing the Civilian Apparatus

Hydro-Congo, the state oil company, was in shambles. Founded in 1973, Sassou Nguesso virtually neglected it during the 1980s, instead entrusting the country's oil to Elf.[12] It controlled exploration, extraction, refinement, and marketing; Hydro-Congo was unable even to verify Congo's receipts [51]. As discussed in Chapter 2, oil was sold under a simple pre-financing agreement, which served everyone save regular Congolese citizens. In one typical transaction from October 2000, BNP Paribas loaned Sassou Nguesso's government $120 million, secured with eight oil cargoes worth some $225 million. BNP Paribas, likely working through Elf/Total, then sold the Congolese oil on the open market, with the proceeds used to repay the loan and accrued interest [155]. The balance, in turn, would be returned to Congo, or simply to Sassou Nguesso himself. European oil companies preferred the system since it minimized risk in an unstable corner of the world; since the European

[9] *La Semaine Africaine*, 25 December 1997.
[10] *La Semaine Africaine*, 26 February 1998.
[11] *Talassa*, 16 August 2002.
[12] Clark and Decalo [49] provide background on Hydro-Congo.

companies extracted the oil off-shore and loaded it directly to ship, they ensured repayment. And perhaps more importantly, the pre-financing scheme avoided Congo's many creditors, since the oil cargo was already loan security. But the system also enabled European firms to purchase oil well below market value, particularly since Congo had no technical capacity to market oil itself.

Massively indebted, Sassou Nguesso sought first to exert more control over Congo's crude oil production. His model in this was son-in-law Omar Bongo, who ruled Gabon between 1967 and his 2009 death, and managed to steal hundreds of millions of dollars worth of Gabonese oil [162]. The centerpiece of Bongo's strategy was the *Société Nationale Petrolière Gabonaise* (SNPG), which oversees upstream activities – production and exploration – and markets a share of its own oil. Chapter 4 documents precisely how Sassou Nguesso created a new state oil company, the *Société Nationale des Pétroles du Congo* (SNPC), to maximize revenue under his personal control. The process illustrates Sassou Nguesso's efforts to secure elite compliance when they are difficult to monitor and have divergent interests. But his personnel choices make clear that he intended to limit the regime's most sensitive positions to natives of Oyo's environs.

Bruno Itoua was given responsibility for the new SNPC. A native of Ollombo, some five miles south of Oyo, he was romantically linked to daughter Claudia. Meanwhile, André Obami Itou dismantled Hydro Congo. A Téké from Gamboma, Plateaux, some 48 miles south of Oyo, in 2002 Obami Itou assumed the Senate presidency, first in the line of succession, and several years later his son was given a key post in the Republican Guard. The other key players: Blaise Elenga and son Denis Christel from Oyo proper, Denis Gokana from Boundji (43 miles), Bernard Okiorina from Lokakoua (42 miles), and Serge Ndeko from Mossaka (57 miles). The *Société Congolaise des Transports Maritimes* (SOCOTRAM), founded in 1990 as the national shipping company, was transferred to Shipping and Trading, a company based in Liechtenstein and owned by nephew César Wilfried; Socotram receives royalties of $2 per ton of oil [77]. Soon the Sassou Nguesso family controlled – excluding daughter Sandrine's hotel, restaurant, and bottled water holdings; daughter Kelly

Christelle's timber holdings; brother Maurice's commercial security holdings; and Edgard's, Maurice's, and Julienne's aviation holdings[13] – some 70% of the country's GDP.

Sassou Nguesso's civil war loyalists – particularly those from Oyo's environs – dominated the key ministries. André Okombi Salissa, a Téké from Lekana, Plateaux, oversaw his own "stable" of Cobra fighters, which he soon ironically rebranded the *Comité d'action pour la défense de la démocratie – Mouvement jeunesse*; Lekana is but 120 miles from Oyo, and Salissa's father long served as Sassou Nguesso's chief fetisher.[14] Mathias Dzon, a Gangolu from Ingouélé, located some 50 miles from Oyo, helped fund the war and served at 33 Avenue Montaigne; he was given the Finance Ministry. To further ingratiate himself to Sassou Nguesso, Dzon nominated Albert Ngondo as Congo's treasurer, a native of Oyo who for years secured young women for his chief's concubine.[15] Regarded as Sassou Nguesso's chief economist since the early 1980s – a dubious distinction, given Congo's economic performance – Pierre Moussa was made Minister of Planning. Along with Gilbert Ondongo, among Sassou Nguesso's key economic counselors and later appointed to the Finance Ministry as well, Moussa was the regime's leading Kouyou, a native of Owando, Cuvette, some 47 miles north of Oyo. The Secretary General of the Presidency went to Firmin Ayessa, a native of Makoua, some 80 miles north of Oyo, whose daughter Belinda is Sassou Nguesso's quasi-official mistress;[16] Belinda also serves as director of the Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza Memorial, the only memorial to a European colonizer anywhere in Africa. Ayessa was later named Sassou Nguesso's chief of staff. Rodolphe Adada, a Téké from Boundji, some 43 miles from Oyo, was given responsibility for Foreign Affairs, just as he had at 33 Avenue Montaigne; his wife Daniéle operates Brazzaville's Lycée Saint Exupéry, which educates the children of the northern elite. François Ibovi, a native of Abo, some five miles outside Oyo, served as Minister of Communications before moving to Territorial Administration

[13] *Lettre du Continent*, 2 September 2010; *Lettre du Continent*, 21 April 2005.
[14] Interview with Patrice Yengo, 8 January 2011.
[15] Interview with Jean Kaba, 13 March 2012.
[16] Interview with Jean Marie Monange, 21 February 2012.

in 2002. And Justin Lekoundzou, also from Boundji, was made Minister for Reconstruction, never mind that the 1991 National Conference found him guilty of embezzling $45 million, for which he was sentenced to 15 years forced labor.[17]

This core did extremely well from the regime, far better, indeed, than would have been necessary to prevent their participation in a *coup d'état*. Okombi Salissa soon purchased a beautiful apartment in Passy, across from Radio France headquarters and blocks from Denis Christel's Rue de la Tour residence. Moussa retreats often to his beautiful apartment overlooking the River Seine: 87 Quai d'Orsay, blocks from the French Foreign Ministry and the Musée d'Orsay, the world's most prestigious Impressionist art museum. Henri Djombo, Ministry of Forestry in every government since 1997 and Sassou Nguesso's frequent tennis partner,[18] owns a sprawling mansion in Bussy-Saint-Georges, a wooded neighborhood outside Paris.[19] Ibovi diverted millions of dollars from a massive infrastructure project in Likouala to transform his native Abo from a village to regional center.[20] Abo now features a fully stocked pharmacy, health center, night club, restaurant, public fountain, athletic complex, and luxury hotel with some 20 rooms and presidential suite. As of 2011, according to the hotel's manager, it had never hosted guests not part of a presidential delegation to Oyo.[21] Ondongo's wife was arrested twice in 2011 – first in Johannesburg, then Paris – with suitcases filled with some $40 million.[22] Ondongo was never disciplined. Adada owns homes on the Île de la Cité, steps from Notre Dame Cathedral, and in Bretagne.

Sassou Nguesso filled several portfolios from outside Oyo's immediate environs. He did so very strategically, however. First, natives of Kouilou benefited from a highly placed interlocutor: First Lady Antoinette Sassou Nguesso, who was born in Pointe-Noire. Antoinette facilitated a *de facto*

[17] *La Semaine Africaine*, 2 November 1991.

[18] Interview with Anonymous, 13 January 2011.

[19] Interview with Guy Mafimba, 18 November 2011. Real estate evidence was provided by anonymous sources.

[20] Interview with Guy Mafimba and Jean Kaba.

[21] Interview, 4 April 2012.

[22] See `http://congopage.com/L-epouse-du-ministre-Gilbert`. Accessed 22 March 2012.

alliance that was consummated just days after Sassou Nguesso reclaimed Brazzaville in October 1997. Jean Pierre Thystére-Tchicaya, long Pointe-Noire's dominant politician, agreed to essentially fold his political machine into the PCT in exchange for Kouilou control of the Oil Ministry;[23] the Ministry first went to Jean Baptiste Tati-Loutard and then, just before his death, André Raphael Loemba. Kouilou natives have also dominated the Merchant Marine Ministry and others based in Pointe-Noire. Thystère Tchicaya was selected president of the National Assembly in 2002, his top lieutenants were given a series of ministerial portfolios, and other aides received lesser positions elsewhere in the bureaucracy.[24] This electoral alliance – and the motives behind it – is the subject of Chapter 7.

Second, indebted to northerners who coordinated his diplomatic and military efforts during the war, Sassou Nguesso was forced to reward them with non-trivial portfolios. Jean Marie Tassoua, a native of Enyelle, Likouala, located in the far northeast corner of the country, was the *de facto* Minister of War and thus served in both the civilian and military headquarters; Tassoua also helped direct the pillaging of Brazzaville's southern quarters after the war. Despite his aspirations to the Defense Ministry,[25] Tassoua was given Energy, which oversees electricity and water provision. Neither was well funded at the time, and so a disappointed Tassoua had few opportunities for enrichment. Pierre Nzé, another veteran from the 1980s, was given the Justice portfolio in 1997. François Lumwamu, a native of Louingui, Pool, some 240 miles from Oyo, remained loyal to Sassou Nguesso throughout all the atrocities inflicted on the region; he was given the Higher Education and Scientific Research portfolios in 1997.

Sassou Nguesso's chief political opponents, of course, remained in exile, and there he preferred them. To ensure they remained so, he loudly accused them of "genocide" at various international

[23] Interview with Roger Mouamba, 29 April 2012.

[24] *La Lettre du Continent*, 26 February 1998.

[25] *La Lettre du Continent*, 30 October 1997. Indeed, Tassoua would have accepted virtually any senior ministerial position, for he was among the least wealthy of Sassou Nguesso's collaborators; interview with Claude Malela Soba, 5 April 2012.

conferences and orchestrated a series of show trials in Brazzaville [192]. Lissouba and Yhombi-Opango, along with two other former ministers, were convicted *in absentia* after a two day trial in December 2001. The charge was treason, for selling Congo's oil to Occidental Petroleum in 1993 at less than a quarter of the market price.[26] Sentenced to 30 years' hard labor, Lissouba dismissed the trial as a joke, particularly given Sassou Nguesso's own habits in the 1980s. Kolélas was sentenced to death for war crimes in May 2000. Their rivals for party leadership exploited their absences. Martin Mberi declared himself UPADS president in October 1997, just after Lissouba fled;[27] Michel Mampouya declared himself MCDDI president in December.

With Angolan soldiers still on Congolese soil and the most popular alternatives in exile, the few erstwhile opposition leaders who remained had no incentives to remain outside the government. And Sassou Nguesso, for his part, would benefit from the appearance of national consensus. Hence he filled a handful of largely irrelevant ministerial portfolios with southerners. In addition to the posts reserved for Thystère Tchicaya's aides, all from Kouilou, Sassou Nguesso welcomed Mberi, Mampouya, Paul Kaya – natives of Bouenza, Pool, and Bouenza, respectively – and a handful of other southern politicians. He did so not to win elections, as Chapter 7 makes clear, but rather to rob frustrated citizens of the leaders who could most easily mobilize protest movements.

3.1.2 Organizing the Military Apparatus

Sassou Nguesso was equally preoccupied with his military position. Indeed, this was perhaps the most sensitive of the tasks before him. For Brazzaville was still surrounded by the remains of the Cocoye and Ninja militias, as well as citizens who loathed him. Sassou Nguesso, somehow, needed to secure Brazzaville, which required securing the Pool region.

Propagated by the regime, the official history is that it faced an open rebellion in the Pool region.

[26] See `http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1732822.stm`.
[27] *La Lettre du Continent*, 15 January 1998.

Their commanders in exile, Ninja soldiers were recruited by Frédéric Bintsamou in early 1998. An unknown 31 year old, in the 1990s Bintsamou made a modest career treating Brazzaville's mentally ill with traditional fetishes. Though he had no previous military experience, the official history goes, Bintsamou would lead the Pool's resistance against Brazzaville and, with any luck, seize power altogether [171, 172, 47, 134].[28] After rebranding himself "Pastor Ntoumi" – *ntoumi* means "messenger" in the Lingala language common among northerners – his new Nsiloulou rebel group entered Brazzaville's southern quarters in December 1998, lightly armed, scarcely trained, and heavily drugged. Welcomed by the population as liberators, the Nsiloulou were quickly rebuffed by the reconstituted military. And so began a virtual genocide against the ethnic Lari who dominated Pool and Brazzaville's Bacongo and Makélékélé neighborhoods.

Government forces – with the aid of Angolans and Chadians – emptied the southern quarters. "Parcel by parcel," *Jeune Afrique* magazine reported, "the cleansing lasted two days, without pity, the majority of those capable of carrying arms summarily executed" [174]. Even those who took refuge in Bacongo churches were slaughtered. The few civilians who survived were forced to follow "humanitarian corridors" from Brazzaville into the Pool forests; the humanitarian corridors reappeared in May 1999, four months later, when Bacongo and Makélékélé residents returned from the forests. Sassou Nguesso's government used these humanitarian corridors to facilitate the massacre:

> We went out and after a few meters, we saw the scattered bodies of neighborhood children whose houses were burning.... And then I saw something I never expected to see in all my life. They lined the men on one side, all nine of them, husbands, brothers, fathers and nephews of the women I was with, our neighbors. And they shot them in front of us, there in front of us. People with whom I had spent three days, youths, full of hope, very confident. ...They died while asking forgiveness, while praying, while crying they were not Ninjas [192].

[28] Bintsamou himself repeated this account to me on 22 December 2011.

While their fathers, husbands, and sons were killed, women were raped. These massacres were organized at the highest levels of the government. On May 8, following Sassou Nguesso's invitation, refugees from Kinshasa were repatriated to Brazzaville with UN assistance. Upon their arrival at the "Beach" – the same location where travelers between the two capitals now complete immigration formalities – nearly 400 men were again separated from women, thrown into trucks, and taken to military headquarters:

> We were there for two weeks, during which we were hardly fed. They told us that ..., Ninjas or not, we would eventually join if freed, and thus none of us would make it out alive. ...Behind the Presidential Palace, they organized us into groups of two, four people were killed at a time. ...Our turn came. We were put along a precipice and I did all I could to survive. I faked my own collapse. ...I crawled among the decomposing bodies. The others died instantly. The guards continued to shoot; my dead brothers protected me. I awaited nightfall to be certain the guards had left [192].

The Beach massacres were so brazen that even France took note. During a March 2004 trip to Paris, Jean François Ndenguet, chief of police since 1997 and a Cobra commander before that, was arrested one evening for his part in the massacres. The response: a phone call from Sassou Nguesso to Jacques Chirac, who promptly ordered Ndenguet released. Ndenguet was repatriated the same night on a private plane from Paris to Brazzaville. On August 12, 2004, SassouNguesso named Ndenguet a *general de division*, the highest rank in the Congolese armed forces. Whatever the threat posed by Bintsamou's Nsiloulou rebel group, Sassou Nguesso clearly used it as pretext for one of the 20th century's great unreported genocides.

There is, however, an even more insidious account, widely accepted by civil society leaders whose integrity is unimpeachable.[29] It begins with a meeting at Tassoua's Brazzaville residence in late 1997

[29] This account is drawn from a collection of interviews with leading civil society figures between February

with a group of Angolan military officers. They agreed to "create" a warlord to reconstitute the scattered Ninja militia, kill the remaining anti-government commanders in a succession battle, and then lead the militia through a series of retreats that would enable the military to cleanse the population. The Pool region has a long history of mystical leaders, and so the natural choice was a mystic. After being rebuffed by the head of the Louzolo spiritual group, the government approached Papa Isaïe, a neo-pentecostal prophet in Brazzaville; Isaïe proposed his mentee, Ntoumi. He received several weeks of military training at Mpila, following which Ntoumi was dispatched to Pool with a Land Cruiser, satellite communications equipment, and an unlimited supply of cash.

In May 1998, some five months after Ntoumi's arrival in Pool, the government provided a trigger for the "rebellion." Months earlier Ndenguet named Camar, his longtime friend, the police commissar in Mindouli, Pool. Camar executed three young men, all laborers on a nearby marijuana farm. Camar buried their bodies outside the Mindouli police station, leaving their heads conspicuously outside, visible to all. The macabre act was provocative, indeed intended to be. Ntoumi was there to lead Pool's "retaliation." Over the next several months Ntoumi engaged in a systematic campaign to eliminate Ninja commanders who were hostile to the regime and contested his leadership. Ntoumi's primary instrument: killing off his rivals during pitched battle. The most prominent of these was Yokoshi, who was shot in the head – from the rear, by Ntoumi loyalists – while leading Ninja forces into battle.

The nature of fighting changed drastically after Yokoshi's death. In 1999 Ntoumi began seizing major population centers and, a few days later, pray conspicuously by a tree; the Archangel Michael, Ntoumi would report upon returning, informed him of the FAC's imminent arrival, and his Nsiloulou rapidly withdrew. The area would then be bombarded by foot soldiers and helicopters. Pool residents soon realized that Ntoumi was communicating not with the Archangel

and April, 2012, all of whom must remain anonymous. The account also appears in Moutsila [131] and Clark and Carter [48].

Michael, they say,[30] but with FAC commanders via satellite phone, essentially coordinating attacks on the civilian population. Throughout 1999 Ntoumi took and lost Mindouli, Kindamba, Goma Ts□ Ts□, and Kinkala in the same fashion, leaving thousands of civilian casualties in his wake. The Nsiloulou were frequently seen receiving large weapons caches and logistical supplies, air-dropped by FAC helicopters. The Nsiloulou thus enjoyed generous weapons supplies, new uniforms that strangely resembled those of the FAC, and expensive SUVs. These, according to observers with knowledge of regional supply chains, could only have been provided by the Sassou Nguesso government. Junior and mid-level FAC officers dispatched to Pool occasionally betrayed the secret; in 2004, for instance, a mid-level officer in Mindouli admitted to one widely respected civil society official that the FAC was supplying Ntoumi with auto parts to facilitate his movement throughout the region. This support became an open secret, and Pool residents quickly grew to loathe Ntoumi as much as Sassou Nguesso. Indeed, Ntoumi's soldiers executed and raped as many Pool residents as the FAC.

Whatever Ntoumi's origins, military operations in Pool were extremely sensitive. Those in Bouenza were no less so. The Angolan soldiers and Rwandan *interahamwe* on whom Sassou Nguesso relied in 1997 were concentrated, as of early 1998, in Bouenza and Niari. With former Cobra fighters, they all set about terrorizing the population: women were raped, homes and businesses pillaged, and young men brutally murdered, often by machete or dragged behind military vehicles. These were the first parts of *Opération Mouébara*, an operational order circulated among senior military officials – uncovered by Bouenza soldiers – that countenanced the systematic depopulation of the country's southern regions. On August 27 Colonel Pierre Mboungou Mboungou, a Mouyondzi native who had trained Lissouba's Cocoye militia, convened the few remaining military officials from the Lissouba government at Pono. They devised a self-defense plan, dubbed their group the *Mouvement national pour la libération du Congo* (MNLC), and by December 1998 had commenced their resis-

[30] Interviews with village elders in Kinkala, Pool, in February 2012.

tance.

Persuaded the four southern regions shared a common enemy, Mboungou Mboungou sent an emissary to Ntoumi in March 1999. For although Mboungou Mboungou knew nothing of him, if their attacks were coordinated, he thought, they were more likely to succeed. Ntoumi responded affirmatively, but was careful to keep his distance. In August 1999 the four southern regions assembled – Mboungou Mboungou, Boungouandza, and Moukanda all attended; Ntoumi sent a representative, Joseph Mbizy – at Komono to create the *Conseil national de la résistance* (CNR). Despite having no military training, relatively few soldiers under his command, and being almost completely unknown, Ntoumi was elected CNR president. This outcome was almost entirely the work of Moukanda, who blocked Mboungou Mboungou's election and proposed the compromise – with the MNLC leadership divided, CNR leadership would fall to Pool – that gave rise to Ntoumi. Moukanda was almost certainly co-opted by the regime. He was found with satellite communications equipment – unattainable without Brazzaville's support – and was promoted to general in the FAC shortly afterwards.

Though organized by career military officers trained in the Soviet Union, the MNLC was unable to dislodge Sassou Nguesso's regional government. The MNLC's leaders were also unimpressed by Ntoumi's leadership. In December 1999 they agreed to a peace conference in Libreville, presided over by Omar Bongo. Each as promised a series of high-ranking positions in the government. Mboungou Mboungou, the MNLC's leader, would even be named Prime Minister. The MNLC disarmed throughout 2000, culminating in the *Dialogue National Sans Exclusive* – an All Inclusive National Dialogue – a tightly choreographed, one month affair in March 2001 that yielded a draft constitution. Preceded by a general amnesty, the Dialogue excluded only Sassou Nguesso's credible opponents in the 2002 presidential election: Lissouba, Kolélas, and Yhombi-Opango. Attended by the presidents of Gabon, Chad, and Central African Republic, the event was intended as the final phase of Sassou Nguesso's nearly four year attempt to consolidate power. Mboungou

Mboungou served as the Dialogue's second vice president, was subsequently named a presidential counselor, and expected to ascend to Prime Minister.

Sassou Nguesso assembled his security apparatus with all the care with which he appointed his civilian government. Again, the military apparatus was dominated by Sassou Nguesso's family and civil war loyalists. The three most sensitive portfolios – the *Direction générale de la securité présidentielle*, *Conseil national de securité*, and *Garde républicaine* – were given to Hilaire Moko, Jean Dominique Okemba, and Blaise Adoua, respectively; Okemba and Moko are nephews, while Adoua is from Oyo. The *Garde républicaine* and the *Direction générale de la securité présidentielle* are the most heavily armed divisions of the military, staffed almost entirely with soldiers from around Oyo. Jean François Ndenguet, another Oyo native, oversaw the National Police, and Pierre Oba, a native of Ollombo, just across the Alima River from Oyo, was named Interior Minister. The para-commando unit, responsible for the airport, was given to Gilbert Bokemba, a Likuba from Mbandza, some 26 miles from Oyo. And Guy Blanchard Okoy, a Téké from Boundji, commanded military zone 6, based in Impfondo and overseeing all of Likouala.

Like his civilian apparatus, Sassou Nguesso's civil war veterans were all represented. For using a warlord as a pretext for ethnic cleansing – regardless of whether Ntoumi was created by the regime – is obviously a sensitive task. It also entails a premium on technical competence, as did waging war in the southern regions. Sassou Nguesso inherited a relatively powerful, regionally heterogeneous military apparatus. For he owed his victory to a group of Likouala commanders. Of the seven key members of the Brazzaville Cobra headquarters, four were Likouala regionals: Yves Motando, Noel Léonard Essongo, Gilbert Mokoki, and Tassoua.[31] These commanders enjoyed both the loyalty of their soldiers and easy access to weapons. In short, despite Sassou Nguesso's evident preference for a

[31] Tassoua was minister of war, and hence served on both the civilian and military headquarters; Tassoua also was Sassou Nguesso's personal representative when he was unable to attend due to security concerns. The three Cuvette natives were Pierre Ngombé, Philippe Longonda, and Jacques Morlende; see Tassoua's manuscript.

tightly circumscribed governing apparatus, he was forced to accept regional heterogeneity.

For every sensitive appointment given to a Likouala regional, however, Sassou Nguesso placed one or two Cuvette regionals to monitor them. This, along with Sassou Nguesso's organization of the oil sector, is the subject of Chapter 4. Hence Motando, appointed chief of staff of the military, was overseen by Okemba and seconded by Prosper Konta Mokono, a native of Pool. Gilbert Mokoki, named commander of ground forces, and Noel Léonard Essongo, given command of the Brazzaville military district, were balanced by Ndenguet, head of the national police, and Valence Ossete Ondziel, head of the gendarmerie. These appointments were obviously frustrating to the Katangaïs, as Likouala natives are occasionally known. Motando thus began plotting a *coup d'état* in 1998, months after Sassou Nguesso took power. The Katangaï plot climaxed on December 18, 1998, when Motando and Oba were to meet a military contingent at Brazzaville's French Cultural Center, less than a mile from the Presidential Palace. The military contingent appeared; neither Motando nor Oba did. For the two, at the very last moment, were unable to agree on who would ascend to the presidency.[32] The *coup d'état* – save for Oba's involvement in it – was among Brazzaville's worst kept secrets.

3.1.3 The 2002 Presidential Elections and Aftermath

Sassou Nguesso turned his attention to the 2002 presidential election immediately after the National Dialogue. With his most viable opponents convicted *in absentia* for crimes against humanity, only the Téké ethnic voting bloc – based in northern Pool, Plateaux, and western Cuvette-Ouest – remained sufficiently numerous to challenge him. Hence Sassou Nguesso again activated his marriage alliance with Omar Bongo, also the region's dominant Téké. In February 2000 Bongo convened the region's most notable Téké political leaders for a congress. Among the attendees: Jean Kaba, Mathias Dzon, Emmanuel Ngouélondélé, Charles David Ganao, and Raymond Damase

[32] Interview with Guy Mafimba, 27 December 2011.

Ngollo. Bongo prevailed upon them to refrain from contesting the 2002 election. Power, he said, would be shared more equitably in the future. Notwithstanding the promises Sassou Nguesso made to Mboungou Mboungou, the post-election government would represent a veritable alliance between Téké notables and Sassou Nguesso's Oyo network.[33] Each endorsed Sassou Nguesso by early February.[34]

The March presidential election was preceded by a constitutional referendum on January 20, 2002. Written by Sassou Nguesso's personal lawyers, the constitution centralized power in his hands. It stipulated a seven year presidential term, with a two term limit; a bicameral legislature, with a Senate elected by regional councils rather than Congolese citizens; appointed regional governors, known as *prefets*, with authority to veto all actions by the elected regional legislature; and even appointed mayors. Amid widespread opposition calls for a boycott, the constitution "won" with nearly 90% of the vote. The presidential election itself was staged on March 10, 2002; on March 14 Sassou Nguesso officially claimed 89.41% of the vote. One measure of fraud: the ratio of official voter rolls to 2002 census projections. This ratio, calculated by region, appears in Figure 3.1. In the northern regions the number of official voters exceeded census projections by as much as 50%; in the southern regions the number of official voters was as much as 50% less than census projections. The May legislative elections returned similarly crushing majorities. Some 10 years later, Sassou Nguesso's allies in the 2002 elections were remarkably open about the extent of fraud. "Elections," one prominent candidate told me, "are prepared well in advance. One doesn't prepare elections to lose them, after all."[35]

If the regime inflated voter rolls in northern regions, it simply threatened southerners into support. One National Assembly candidate courted voters in southern Pool this way:

> I spend everyday with President Sassou Nguesso. If you don't vote for me, we'll raze

[33] Interview with Jean Kaba, 5 February 2012.
[34] See successive issues of *La Semaine Africaine*.
[35] Interview with Jean Kaba, 5 February 2012.

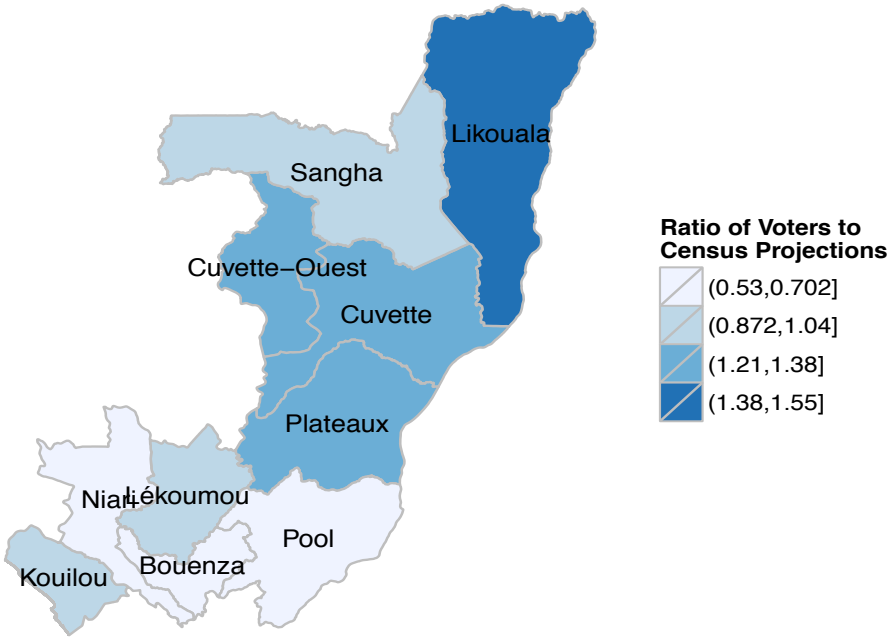

Figure 3.1: Evidence of electoral fraud in the 2002 presidential election. The shaded regions represent areas where voter rolls were systematically inflated relative to census projections.

> your villages and you'll flee into the forest, like all the others.[36]

In private, Sassou Nguesso was similarly direct. Just days before the presidential election, Sassou Nguesso warned Milongo against alleging electoral fraud. For if the population protested, Sassou Nguesso threatened, he "would not hesitate to have the military open fire."[37] Rather than risk it,

[36] *La Semaine Africaine*, 30 May 2002.

[37] Interview with Claude Malela Soba, 5 April 2012.

Milongo simply withdrew. The set of elections, *Talassa* observed, were "the most fraudulent ever in Congo's history."[38] *La Semaine Africaine* apparently agreed. It printed a stream of editorials and interviews that described the electoral process as "illegal,"[39] "corrupted,"[40] "a mascarade,"[41] "fraudulent,"[42] "a pillaging,"[43] "mafia-esque,"[44] and "a translation of military victory into political victory."[45] Sassou Nguesso's victory announcement, then, was particularly ironic. "This victory is above all your own," Sassou Nguesso declared, "that of the Congolese people."[46] The Congolese people simultaneously funded Jacques Chirac's April 2002 reelection. For in the months immediately preceding it Sassou Nguesso visited Dominique de Villepin, then Chirac's prime minister and protégé, with a suitcase containing some $10 million.[47]

With his victory, Sassou Nguesso went from a glorified warlord to an elected president with virtually no domestic opposition. Global Witness [77] estimated Sassou Nguesso was stealing at least $250 million per year, a figure which my calculations with IMF officials confirm.[48] Given the prevalence of oil-backed loans, Sassou Nguesso's total thefts likely amounted to hundreds of millions of dollars more. Flush with cash, in 2001 he broke ground on the country's third international airport, located in Ollombo, some five miles from Oyo. The airport's express purpose was to facilitate arms imports, both to his Republican Guard – trained in the forests of Tsambitso, some 3 miles to Oyo's east, where his Cobra militia trained as well – and if ever he lost control of Brazzaville's airport.[49]

[38] *Talassa*, 16 August 2002.
[39] *La Semaine Africaine*, 16 February 2002.
[40] *La Semaine Africaine*, 8 March 2002.
[41] *La Semaine Africaine*, 14 March 2002.
[42] *La Semaine Africaine*, 29 May 2002.
[43] *La Semaine Africaine*, 30 May 2002.
[44] *La Semaine Africaine*, 5 June 2002.
[45] *La Semaine Africaine*, 16 July 2002.
[46] *La Semaine Africaine*, 21 March 2002.
[47] See `http://www.news.com.au/world/chirac-and-pm-got-cash-from-africa/story-fn6sb9br-1226134381520`, accessed 22 March 2012. Also find Robert Bourgi's book *Briefcase Republic*.
[48] Interviews with Oscar Melhado, November 2011 through July 2012.
[49] Interview with Dave Bill, 24 November 2011.

Anticipating the increased transparency that would accompany debt relief negotiations, Sassou Nguesso prepared for a period of economic austerity. Shortly after his return to power, the SNPC claimed Total owed the government some $500 million for accounting errors made under Lissouba. Denis Gokana, then a special counselor to the president, was instrumental in proposing a resolution: Congo would renounce its demands in exchange for rescheduling $197 million of oil-backed debt and Total's share of the Likouala oil field. With Likouala's official reserves greater than 30 million barrels and Total entitled to 65% of production,[50] Total's share was worth nearly approximately $500 million at late 2002 prices. The SNPC, in turn, sold this share to Likouala SA for a mere $160 million [77]. Likouala SA's owner: Maurice Nguesso, the president's older brother, to whom Total arranged a loan from BNP Paribas to facilitate the purchase. At 2009 prices, Likouala SA's share is worth nearly 1.5 billion, transferring Congo's national wealth directly to the ruling family and beyond the watchful eye of the IMF. Likouala SA's general administrator was Andre Bahoumina, a Congolese national and former Total employee. Total continued to pay Bahoumina's salary.[51]

Sassou Nguesso also built the foundations of a propaganda empire that soon controlled virtually all the information to which his compatriots have access. Jean Paul Pigasse, who had managed Sassou Nguesso's propaganda apparatus since 1995, launched a monthly newspaper, *Les Dépêches de Brazzaville*, in 2002. *Les Dépêches* started publishing weekly in 2006 and then daily in 2007; it remains Congo's only daily newspaper. A fifth of the price of other newspapers, it is funded directly by the SNPC. Its editorial committee is overseen by Émile Gankama, a senior intelligence officer in the Congolese military.[52] With Henri Lopès, Sassou Nguesso's ambassador to Paris since 1998, Pigasse also oversees *Géopolitique Africaine*, a thrice yearly review of international affairs with an annual budget of nearly $1 million. Sassou Nguesso is its *president d'honneur*, and the SNPC funds

[50] This is based on `http://www.mefb-cg.org/petroles/pdf/Rapport_proc1avril_30juin09.pdf`.
[51] *La Lettre du Continent*, 24 March 2005.
[52] Interview with Auguste Nguembo, 22 May 2012.

its operations.[53] The few remaining independent newspapers either self-censor or adopt an obviously pro-government editorial line in exchange for advertising revenue and ministerial access. The 2002 Constitution created the *Conseil Superieur de la Liberté Communication* ostensibly to protect journalistic freedom. A distinctly Orwellian name, the CSLC's primary occupation is to harass *Talassa* and the other few opposition newspapers. The country's four television stations are equally controlled by the family: one is owned by elder brother Maurice, one by daughter Claudia, one by Norbert Dabira, Inspector General of the Armed Forces and formerly a Cobra commander, and one by the state itself. And in partnership with the obviously non-democratic governments of Equatorial Guinea, Chad, Cameroon, and Gabon, Sassou Nguesso recently launched Africa 24, which styles itself as the pan-African counterpart to CNN and the BBC.

Sassou Nguesso could not, however, simply abolish the country's few independent human rights NGOs. For the oldest of these, *Observatoire Congolais des Droits de l'Homme* (OCDH), had been a member of the *Fédération Internationale des Droits de l'Homme* (FIDH) in France since its 1994 creation, and in 2006 was even recognized by the French government. Sassou Nguesso thus charged an Owando native, Germain Céphas Ewangui, with creating the *Fédération Congolaise des Droits de l'Homme* (FECODHO), effectively a government-operated NGO that reliably justifies Sassou Nguesso's private interests with human rights norms. *Les Dépêches de Brazzaville* obviously celebrated its arrival:

> The birth of FECODHO will finally enable us to effectively counter the disinformation practiced on the international stage by the *Observatoire Congolais des Droits de l'Homme* and the *Fédération Internationale des Droits de l'Homme*.[54]

Ewangui has consistently argued that French courts should not investigate the Beach Massacre of

[53] *La Lettre du Continent*, 15 March 2012.
[54] *Les Dépêches de Brazzaville*, 23 August 2002.

1999,[55] that Congolese elections are generally fair,[56] and that the French investigation into Sassou Nguesso's real estate holdings is both unjustified and a violation of Congolese sovereignty. Indeed, after the November 2010 ruling that French courts would indeed hear the case, Ewangui announced he would appeal to the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg. He said this to *La Semaine Africaine*:

> To be a human rights activist does not mean dispensing with patriotism or even Pan-Africanism, which must be, for us, a complete ideology. We are confronting a scandalous violation of the norms that govern relations between sovereign states, and if we cede, it will be, tomorrow, the basis for the disintegration of our states that were formerly colonized and today independent for half a century.[57]

Sassou Nguesso, in short, was quickly securing himself, and the climate in Brazzaville changed palpably. For the first time in the country's history, private citizens, political figures, and local businesses began purchasing conspicuously large advertisements in Brazzaville's leading independent newspapers at New Years and August 15, Congo's independence holiday. Their purpose: to congratulate Sassou Nguesso for his many accomplishments of the previous year and to extend "best wishes" for the next. A typical advertisement, taken from January 2012, appears in Figure 3.2. It is unclear if Sassou Nguesso actually reads them. But this, I am told, is of little import. For the advertisements' purpose is to publicly signal one's support for Sassou Nguesso, to be publicly identified with him.

Sassou Nguesso responded to this new environment by adjusting his regime's personnel. Notwithstanding his promises to Bongo, Sassou Nguesso redoubled his efforts to create a geographic in-group – especially for the regime's more critical portfolios – centered on Oyo. This often entailed

[55] *La Semaine Africaine*, 16 December 2004; also `http://fr.allafrica.com/stories/200210020614.html`.
[56] *La Semaine Africaine*, 23 December 2011.
[57] See *La Semaine Africaine*, 22 December 2010.

dismissing civil war veterans whose birth villages were far from Oyo, even though their loyalty was unquestioned. Chief of Staff Motando was replaced by Jacques Yvon Ndolou, another Cobra commander and a Likuba from Mossaka; he was given the Defense Ministry two years later, succeeded as military chief of staff by Charles Richard Mondjo, a Kouyou from Owando. Tassoua, a native of Enyelle, Likouala, located in the far northeast corner of the country, was Energy Minister until 2002, when he was given an even more trivial position: vice president of the Economic and Social Council. Other wartime loyalists who provided regional balance in 1997 were also quickly dismissed. Pierre Nzé, a native of Ouesso, Sangha, nearly 200 miles from Oyo, was relegated to the Senate. François Lumwamu, a native of Louingui, Pool, some 240 miles from Oyo, remained loyal to Sassou Nguesso throughout all the atrocities inflicted on the region; given the Higher Education and Scientific Research portfolios in 1997, he was displaced two years later by Henri Ossèbi, a Makoua from Gamboma, and Pierre Nzila, a Téké from Okoyo, Cuvette, some 65 miles from Oyo. Mboungou Mboungou's claim on the Prime Ministership was simply rejected; there would be no Prime Minister, and Mboungou Mboungou was left, without a budget, at the High Commission for Ex-Combattants. The Téké bloc went almost entirely uncompensated. Ngouélondélé and Dzon faced off for the first deputy seat from Gamboma, Plateaux, and lost to an unknown third candidate, Paul Stanislas Nguie; Kaba, a distant cousin of Sassou Nguesso, won Gamboma's second seat. Dzon was removed from the Finance Ministry. Mberi and Mampouya, now discredited among UPADS and MCDDI partisans, were removed, as were Thystère-Tchicaya's top aides.

Apart from his geographic in-group, Sassou Nguesso also recruited the wives and mistresses of his former rivals. Ange Diawara, a native of Pool, attempted a *coup d'état* in February 1972 against Marien Ngouabi; once captured and killed, Sassou Nguesso had his head displayed in Brazzaville's central stadium, a spectacularly gruesome affair [20]. Adelaïde Mougany,[58] his wife, entered Sassou Nguesso's government in 2002, and has appeared in each government since. She was joined by Em-

[58] She is also known as Adelaïde Moundélé Ngollo, from a subsequent marriage.

ilienne Raoul, wife of General Alfred Raoul, Congo's first graduate of Saint-Cyr and briefly prime minister and president in 1968; like Mougany, she has remained in the government since. Claudine Munari, Lissouba's onetime cabinet director and, according to many, mistress, returned from exile in 2001 to participate in the *Nationale Dialogue Sans Exclusive*; she was elected to the National Assembly in 2002 and named to the government in 2009. Shortly after André Milongo's 2007 death, Sassou Nguesso prevailed upon his widow, Marie-Therèse, to accept the mayoralty of Boko, their native town and chief constituency.[59] Congo is an overwhelmingly patriarchal society, and these appointments are interpreted as submission to Sassou Nguesso's own patriarchy. Mario Vargas Llosa wrote of this in *Feast of the Goat*.

3.1.4 Creating Co-Ethnicity, Geographic Proximity, and Politics

The quantitative evidence confirms Sassou Nguesso's efforts to construct a geographic in-group. Figure 3.3 presents a map of Congo, with its 10 regions shaded according to population density. None of the northern regions contain more than five people per square kilometer; the southern regions contain as many as 25 people per square kilometer.

The dataset of Congolese political elites records biographic and professional data for virtually all of Congo's major and mid-level appointees since 1997: generals, senior colonels, ministers, presidential advisors, local and regional executives, heads of parastatals, and appointees to the various constitutional courts and advisory bodies. Constructed from hundreds of key informant interviews, the archives of Brazzaville's three leading newspapers, and a range of other sources, it counts more than 500 appointees to nearly 600 different regime portfolios. Understanding Sassou Nguesso's appointments requires also understanding *who could have been appointed but was not*. That is, it requires a counterfactual set of political elites. Therefore, I also record more than 600 other major figures: all members of parliament, all senators, colonels who occupied mid-level positions in the military,

[59] Interview with Claude Malela Soba, 5 April 2012.

national level officials of all political parties, prominent civil society leaders, leading business figures, and senior officials in the Lissouba regime of the 1980s. Altogether, the dataset counts nearly 1, 300 members of Congo's political and economic elite since Sassou Nguesso's return, yielding roughly 20, 000 elite-year observations. Descriptive statistics for appointees and non-appointees appear in Figure 3.5.

While virtually all northern regions supported Sassou Nguesso's war effort – and especially the Likouala region, which provided both generals and foot soldiers – Sassou Nguesso recruits overwhelmingly from an 85 mile radius around Oyo. The maps in Figures 3.3 and 3.4 make this abundantly clear. The former overlays the birth village of each of Sassou Nguesso's more than 500 appointees; the latter overlays the birth village of each of the dataset's 1, 300 political and economic elites, with those of Mbochi co-ethnics shaded. Congo's political elite, Figure 3.4 suggests, reflects the country's underlying demography. The southern regions are far more dense, and hence give the country the majority of its political leaders. Still, Figure 3.3 shows just how thoroughly Sassou Nguesso recruits from Oyo's environs.

Scholars cite ethnicity as a central determinant of economic growth [9], public good provision [10, 127, 126, 82], interpersonal trust [34], political party cohesion [45, 132], and civil war [63]. While co-ethnicity and geographic proximity are correlated – Sassou Nguesso's Mbochi co-ethnics are concentrated around Oyo, as Figure 3.4 suggests – the statistical evidence makes clear that geographic proximity itself drives Sassou Nguesso's recruitment decisions. Put simply, Sassou Nguesso's in-group is geographic rather than ethnic.[60]

Table 3.1 presents the results of a series of statistical models that estimate the probability that elite

[60] Due to a peculiar feature of Congo's ethnic geography, geographic proximity and ethnicity are not fully collinear. Oyo sits on the banks of the Alima River, separated from the Plateaux region by a short bridge. The Alima is the geographic center of Sassou Nguesso's Mbochi ethnic group, with Mbochis residing on either of its banks. The ethnic border to the south lies but 30 miles away, beyond which the Téké ethnicity dominates; the northern ethnic border is another 30 miles away, beyond which the Kouyou and Makoua ethnicities dominate. Mbochiland thus constitutes a narrow band around the length of the Alima.

i receives a regime appointment in year *t* as a function of co-ethnicity with Sassou Nguesso and the distance, in miles, of his birth village from Oyo. The models control for a range of individual-level characteristics: whether elite *i* is a relative of Sassou Nguesso or a member of his concubine network, military general, native of Kouilou or Likouala, member of the PCT, civil war veteran, former Lissouba minister, the population of elite *i*'s native region, and whether elite *i* held an appointment in year $t - 1$. Importantly, these control variables capture individual level features associated with intrinsic loyalty or disloyalty to Sassou Nguesso. I also include year fixed effects to accommodate unobserved features of particular years, such as the amount of oil theft or the size of the full regime. Since the outcome is dichotomous – either elite *i* occupied an intermediate or high level position in the regime in year *t*, or did not – I employ logit models.

The results are visualized in Figure 3.6. The right column records the probability that elite *i* received a high level position in Sassou Nguesso's security apparatus: Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, Defense Minister, Commander of the Brazzaville Military Zone, Chief of Presidential Security, Chief of the National Security Council, Commander of Ground Forces, Chief of Territorial Surveillance, and Director of the National Police, among others. These responsibilities, indeed, are among the most sensitive that Sassou Nguesso delegates, and the dataset counts roughly 80 of them.[61] The center column records the probability that elite *i* received a high level appointment to the civilian apparatus in year *t*: the Finance, Oil, Foreign Affairs, Forestry, and Interior Ministries, President of the Supreme Court, Ambassadors to France and China, and Director of the SNPC, among others. Like the high level appointments to the military apparatus, these appointments are most critical to regime security. The left column records the probability that elite *i* received a mid-level appointment to the civilian apparatus in year *t*. These appointments are very public – low level ministers, for instance, or members of the Supreme Court – but less critical to Sassou Nguesso's

[61]Since all military appointments are relatively sensitive, I record all colonels in the dataset as occupying mid-level positions.

Table 3.1: Determinants of High Level Appointment

	Co-ethnicity Logit	Co-ethnicity Logit	Co-ethnicity Logit	Distance Logit	Distance Logit	Distance Logit	Matching Logit	Matching Logit	Matching Logit	Within Radius Logit
Oyo Distance				-0.006**	-0.011**	-0.006**				-0.020†
				(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)				(0.012)
Mbochi Co-Ethnicity	0.790**	0.773**	1.163**	-0.058	-0.198	0.390				-0.054
	(0.189)	(0.168)	(0.276)	(0.225)	(0.199)	(0.333)				(0.074)
Family	0.858**	1.947**	-0.874*	0.560†	1.654**	-0.631				0.820**
	(0.300)	(0.228)	(0.347)	(0.307)	(0.229)	(0.388)				(0.206)
Concubine Network	1.644**	-18.89		1.776**	-18.37					-14.85
	(0.447)	(1878.0)		(0.444)	(1843.0)					(308.2)
General	-0.110	-1.032**	1.064**	-0.389	-1.857**	1.376**				0.134
	(0.361)	(0.288)	(0.247)	(0.375)	(0.313)	(3.191)				(0.256)
Kouilou Native	0.301	1.361**	2.202†	0.418	3.444**	0.191				
	(0.327)	(0.429)	(1.261)	(0.351)	(0.6341)	(1.138)				
Likouala Native	-1.052**	0.107	-0.311	0.621**	2.274**	-0.216				
	(0.236)	(0.240)	(0.407)	(0.329)	(0.3417)	(0.547)				
PCT or Allied Party	2.987**	15.28	-17.39	2.922**	15.39	-16.32				-0.257
	(0.532)	(458.9)	(1015.9)	(0.531)	(463.5)	(1097.0)				(0.436)
Native Region Population	-0.157	-0.546*	-2.345**	0.286	0.016	-0.269				-2.057**
	(0.182)	(0.243)	(0.800)	(0.211)	(0.364)	(0.682)				(0.655)
Civil War Veteran	1.979**	1.601**	0.235	1.638**	1.666**	0.926**				1.272**
	(0.231)	(0.164)	(0.227)	(0.229)	(0.183)	(0.289)				(0.200)
Appointee_{t-1}	4.444**	4.287**	36.547	4.348**	4.127**	35.37				4.693**
	(0.141)	(3.430)	(1158.86)	(0.145)	(0.345)	(1319.00)				(0.423)
Catchment							0.707**	2.321**	1.767**	
							(0.119)	(0.312)	(0.356)	
Oyo Distance × Mbochi										0.001
										(0.013)
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes					Yes
Village Fixed Effects	No	No	No	No	No					Yes
N							1802		458	1853

Significance levels: † : 10% * : 5% ** : 1%

hold on power. I classified all positions with a team of Congolese research assistants, many of whom occupied positions in the government bureaucracy themselves.

For all columns, the left points give the effect of co-ethnicity with Sassou Nguesso, *when the distance of elite i's birth village from Oyo is excluded*. In all models, co-ethnicity with Sassou Nguesso *appears* to significantly increase the probability of appointment, especially for the regime's most critical positions. Indeed, conditional on occupying a regime portfolio in year $t-1$, Mbochi co-ethnicity increases the probability that elite i receives a high level position in the civilian apparatus increases from 16% to 30%; Mbochi co-ethnicity increases the probability that elite i receives a high level position in the security apparatus increases from 40% to 66%. Yet when geographic proximity is controlled for, Mbochi co-ethnicity has virtually no effect, as the center points in all columns demonstrate.

The final points in all columns report the effect of geographic proximity on elite i's appointment probability. These make clear that the explanatory power attributed to Mbochi co-ethnicity is actually due to geographic proximity. While Mbochi co-ethnicity has no effect, elites whose native villages are roughly 200 miles from Oyo are extremely unlikely to occupy a high level civilian post – as the center column makes clear – *even if they occupied a high level civilian post in year* $t-1$. The right column suggests that, in the security apparatus, elite i's appointment status in year $t-1$ has a considerable effect on his appointment prospects in year t. Still, the effect of geographic proximity is considerable. Elites whose native villages are but 10 miles from Oyo are twice as likely to hold a high level position in the security apparatus than their counterparts at 200 miles.[62] The models perform remarkably well. For intermediate level appointments in the civilian apparatus, the model correctly predicts 92% of the outcomes; for high level civilian appointments, the model correctly predicts 93%

[62]Geographic proximity may simply reflect inclusion in some core social network, from which Sassou Nguesso selects his elite. My research, however, suggests that elite social networks are endogenous to appointment itself. Indeed, elite social networks – in Congo as in most autocracies – form as a result of appointment: Brazzaville is small, and hence its elite attend the same parties, dine at the same restaurants, and send their children to the same schools.

of outcomes; and for high level appointments in the security apparatus, the model correctly predicts 73% of the outcomes.

To confirm that Sassou Nguesso constructs his in-group based on geographic proximity rather than Mbochi co-ethnicity, I employ two robustness checks. First, since elites from Oyo's environs are systematically different than their counterparts – more likely to be biological relatives, to have fought in the 1997 civil war, and more likely to be PCT members, among other distinctions – the statistical results described above could be driven by out of sample extrapolation. Both the map in Figure 3.4 and the plot in Figure 3.7 confirm that the core of the geographic in-group is limited to a roughly 85 mile radius around Oyo.[63] Accordingly, I employ a matching estimator that restricts attention to elites who are similar in all respects *save whether their native village lies within this* 85 *mile radius around Oyo*. The results appear in columns seven through nine of Table 3.1, and they are virtually identical to the others. They suggest that simply residing within the catchment area is associated with a 17% increase in the probability of occupying a mid-level civilian portfolio in year *t*, and a 20% increase in the probability of occupying a high-level civilian portfolio in year *t*. For security officials, residing in the catchment area is associated with a 41% increase in the probability of occupying a high-level military portfolio in year *t*.

Second, I exploit the fact that, within the 85 mile radius around Oyo, the dataset also includes some 103 non-Mbochis from 29 different villages. I then ask whether, within this 85 mile radius, Mbochis enjoy a higher probability of appointment to the regime's most sensitive positions than non-Mbochis. The results appear in the final column of Table 3.1 and are visualized in Figure 3.8. Again, Mbochi co-ethnics enjoy virtually no advantage in the market for high level appointments after the distance of their home village from Oyo is controlled for. Indeed, Mbochi co-ethnics are no more attractive than their counterparts whose birth villages are equidistant from Oyo *at any point in*

[63]Figure 3.7 presents the results of a non-parametric model that estimates elite *i*'s probability of appointment as a function of birth village distance to Oyo, controlling for Mbochi co-ethnicity.

the catchment area.

Observers of Congolese politics often describe the country in ethnic terms. Sassou Nguesso, Paris-based *Jeune Afrique* recently wrote, "reserves the key positions of power for his own ethnic group, the Mbochi, to the detriment of others."[64] My research suggests, however, that Sassou Nguesso's recruitment choices themselves create an enlarged Mbochi ethnicity. For ethnicity itself, as Bates [18, 19] first argued and Posner [148] affirmed, is endogenous to politics. This is especially true when identifying – or, more precisely, being identified – as a certain ethnicity has such significant economic and political implications. The Sassou Nguesso family knows this. I once asked a member of the Sassou Nguesso family this: "People sort of claim to be Mbochi all the time, don't they? What do you think of this?" He responded:

> Of course they do. We just laugh, really. I mean, they do it for a reason.[65]

The reasons, of course, are the advantages of being identified as a member of the in-group: by regular Congolese citizens, foreign investors who require a local interlocutor, local security officers who are loathe to harass someone with ministerial connections, and the regime itself.

3.1.5 Political Consequences

Sassou Nguesso's recruitment strategy is obvious to even first time visitors. Brazzaville newspapers, warned by the *Conseil Supérieur de la Liberté de Communication* against criticizing the government,[66] are littered with family names of distinctly northern provenance: Goma, Ibovi, Itoua, Moundélé-Ngollo, Moussa, Nguesso, Oba, Ondongo, and a handful of others. Brazzaville's French style *patisseries* are mostly populated by northerners, with finely tailored silk suits and SUVs. While

[64] See `http://www.jeuneafrique.com/actu/20140205T134832Z20140205T134813Z/`.

[65] Interview with Omar Bongo Ondimba, 2 April 2014.

[66] One notable incident: In March 2012, after a Brazzaville munitions depot exploded, decimating several neighborhoods and killing at least 1, 000, Jacques Banangazala, the CSLC president, warned Forum TV against broadcasting Joe Ebina's calls for the government to resign. Interview with Ebina, 17 March 2012.

the road network in the population dense south is virtually impassable after a series of wars and 15 years of neglect, Brazzaville now boasts two highways to the north, with numerous *espaces touristiques* – weekend retreats – for Brazzaville's northerners along the way. And Pointe-Noire, Congo's economic capital and southernmost city, is now thoroughly dominated by northerners, with their beachfront villas increasingly displacing the local population.

Yet the strategy entails real risks for Sassou Nguesso. Congo's southerners, indeed, are acutely aware of their second class status. Despite fertile soil and high population density, the southern regions have virtually no access to potable water and electricity. Southerners speak commonly of liberation and revolution and the ultimate sacrifice. "We still have our dignity," Mboungou Mboungou told me, "and we will continue to fight."[67] A former high ranking southerner in the oil sector confided: "Our history is written in blood. But we simply don't have the weapons to threaten the government."[68] In short, southerners would gladly return to war if they had only a leader around whom to rally and access to arms.[69] Sassou Nguesso's partisans repeat a variety of subtly threatening slogans to discourage retribution: "Don't touch my president," among others.

Increasingly, northerners excluded from the in-group feel similarly. Sassou Nguesso's decision to marginalize Likouala natives – who, though far from Oyo, served Sassou Nguesso faithfully during the civil war – so angered them that their leaders privately considered *coups d'état* on several occasions between late 1998 and 2005. They considered Sassou Nguesso's provocation both unnecessary and unjust. For they had sacrificed tremendously to help return Sassou Nguesso to power, their loyalty beyond reproach.[70] The country is currently at peace, but for how long remains unclear. This tension is a direct consequence of Sassou Nguesso's recruitment strategy.

Students of autocratic politics generally treat loyalty as a function of financial interest. Regime

[67] Interview with Pierre Mboungou Mboungou, 10 June 2013.
[68] Wilfried Kivouvou, 16 June 2013.
[69] Interview former vice mayor of Brazzaville and Ministerial Cabinet Director, 18 February 2012.
[70] Interviews with Claude Malela Soba, 5 April 2012, and Guy Mafimba, 16 May 2012.

appointees, the arguments generally go, comply with the autocrat because he compensates them for it, handsomely or otherwise [142]. The scale of corruption in Sassou Nguesso's Congo is sufficient to secure the loyalty of even the most hardened political opponents. Yet Sassou Nguesso accepts significant risk to construct a geographically homogenous in-group, even dismissing previous demonstrations of loyalty. Why dismiss otherwise loyal servants when the returns from appointment are so high? And why set the returns from appointment so much higher than required to deter conspiracies?

3.2 A Theory of Recruitment

To explore why Sassou Nguesso was willing to take such great risks – and to dismiss previous demonstrations of loyalty – to construct a geographically homogenous coalition, I employ game theory. The model below distills the complicated realities of autocratic politics into a very simple framework, inspired by my years in Congo, which enables us to appreciate the dynamics that led Sassou Nguesso to take such risks.

3.2.1 Environment

Consider a society comprised of an autocrat D, a challenger $-D$, and an elite of size N. The autocrat must fill γ regime portfolios from among the society's N elites. The autocrat sets amount b^D of state revenue R to share with occupants of the γ portfolios. The autocrat possesses some amount of coalition power $\vartheta \in (0, 1)$, which is common knowledge among elites. I refer to ϑ as the autocrat's survival parameter. It captures the probability that the autocrat is able to survive any anti-regime activity in which elite i engages. This could reflect support from the French military or the competence of the autocrat's personal security apparatus.

When the game begins, the autocrat may choose to restrict the pool of potential appointees to

some group $n \subset N$. In so doing, the autocrat reduces the number of candidates for the regime's γ portfolios from N to n, creating an effective pool of appointees that is potentially much smaller. Since occupants of the γ portfolios receive amount b^D of state revenue, elites in set n expect utility

$$u_i(i \in n) = b^D \frac{\gamma}{n} \zeta$$

before the game begins. The parameter $\zeta \in [0, 1]$ measures the credibility with which the autocrat commits to selecting the j portfolio occupants from among elites in set n. As $\zeta \to 0$, the autocrat's commitment is less credible, perhaps because electoral interests may compel him to create political alliances with elites from outside the in-group or because the autocrat arbitrarily removes elites from the in-group to remind them of the primacy of his personal favor. Mobutu Sese Seko did something similar; indeed, the determinants of ζ are the subject of Chapter 6. If, however, elite i is among the $n - \gamma$ elites who comprise the in-group but do not receive a portfolio, he receives utility of 0.

If they are dissatisfied with the autocrat's proposed b^D, elites in set n may support a rival autocrat $-D$, who offers amount b^{-D} in all subsequent periods. For in-group elites enjoy a special ability to depose him. In the context of Sassou Nguesso's Congo, in-group elites – even those who do not occupy critical regime portfolios – enjoy a proximity to power that affords them access to foreign investors, diplomats, and potentially disgruntled elites. In short, by creating an in-group, the autocrat gives *all* its members the tools with which to depose him, even if they do not currently occupy a regime portfolio. I assume that elite i believes his anti-regime activity will yield a *coup d'état* with probability $1 - \vartheta_D$. This is my interpretation of "divide and rule" politics. Although many elites may engage in anti-regime activity, their efforts are difficult to coordinate, for communication is made difficult by the widespread suspicion that characterizes life in autocracies. Hence from elite i's perspective, the probability that his anti-regime activities yield a successful coup is simply whatever coalition power the autocrat is unable to command $1 - \vartheta_D$. From the autocrat's perspective, however,

since all elites receive the same allocation b^D, all have the same preferences for an alternative autocrat $-D$. Thus, if the autocrat sets b^D less than his elites' utility from supporting his rival $-D$, he loses power with certainty.

Since the effective pool of candidates is common knowledge – members of the society observe the autocrat's appointees, and thus recognize if they are disqualified for some ascriptive reason – this also creates a set of elites $m \subset N$, where $m + n = N$, that has virtually no chance of being appointed to the regime's high level positions. Since they derive no utility from the regime, this group is committed to mobilizing the population for a revolution. The probability of a popular revolution led by set m elites is

$$\Pr(\text{Revolution}) \quad = \quad \varrho \frac{m}{N}$$

or the proportion of elites excluded from the effective pool of candidates, weighted by ϱ. The parameter ϱ gives the efficacy with which excluded elites mobilize the population behind them, and the subject of Chapter 7. As $\varrho \to 1$, excluded elites are able to mobilize frustrated citizens behind them more easily.

The timing of the game is visualized in Figure 3.9.

3.2.2 Results

The model's results are summarized in Proposition 1.

Proposition 1 ("Creating an In-Group"). *Assume the challenger is unable to commit to b^{-D} ex ante and faces the same strategic environment as the incumbent autocrat. Then the autocrat creates an in-group if*

$$\zeta + \vartheta \quad > \quad 1 \tag{3.1}$$

The in-group is size

$$N(\textit{In-Group}) \quad = \quad \frac{\gamma\zeta}{1-\vartheta} \tag{3.2}$$

The autocrat shares amount

$$b^{D*} = b^{-D*} \quad = \quad \frac{R}{2+N^{\frac{1-}{}\frac{1-}{}}} \tag{3.3}$$

of state revenue R. The probability of a revolt is

$$Pr(\textit{Revolt}) \quad = \quad \varrho\left[1-\frac{1}{N}\frac{\gamma\zeta}{1-\vartheta}\right] \tag{3.4}$$

Proposition 1 suggests that autocrats create an in-group as a "politics of hope." The advantages of an in-group are clearly visualized in Figure 3.10. When the autocrat forgoes creating an in-group, elites have essentially the same probability of receiving a regime portfolio: $\frac{1}{N}$. This probability is potentially very low, and hence *all* elites who are excluded from the regime have a relatively strong interest in removing it. By contrast, when the autocrat can credibly commit to considering only $n^* < N$ elites for the regime's most lucrative positions, the probability that in-group elites are appointed in subsequent periods rises to $\frac{1}{n^*}$. Accordingly, the autocrat can rely on the prospect of future appointments to secure their loyalty. In short, the autocrat creates an in-group to secure the loyalty not of his γ appointees – this is assured by their financial interests, after all – but the loyalty of the $n^* - \gamma$ members of the in-group who gain nothing from the regime. This explains why Sassou Nguesso was so willing to risk the treachery of a few angry Likouala natives to consolidate his geographic in-group around Oyo. In so doing, he could gain the loyalty of a broad swathe of elites centered 85 miles around Oyo.

The model also explains why Sassou Nguesso laid the foundations for his in-group around 2002.

Put simply, he was more secure than ever. The elections gave his power a veneer of legitimacy. He was stealing some $250 million per year from the public treasury. Brazzaville was no longer completely surrounded enemies. In the context of the model, ϑ had increased from 1997. Consequently, opening the perquisites of power to a broader in-group – perquisites that could threaten Sassou Nguesso if a rival autocrat emerged – was less threatening to him.

If this "politics of hope" secures the loyalty of the $n^* - \gamma$ elites who do not benefit directly from the regime, it also comes at a price. For the autocrat is forced to increase the allocation b^D he provides his γ appointees to compensate the non-appointed members of the in-group. Indeed, regime appointees receive a premium: an additional sum beyond what is required to secure their loyalty, which secures the loyalty of in-group non-appointees. In this respect, the internal finances of autocrat are similar to those of a drug gang [110]. Many regime supporters gain virtually nothing from their support, save the hope that one day they might. In the meantime, appointees do exceedingly well, much better than strictly necessary to secure their loyalty.

Proposition 1 suggests that the autocrat's commitment to appointing from the in-group, given by ζ, must be credible. This underscores another way that nominally democratic institutions render life as an autocrat perilous. As discussed in Chapter 7, elections occasionally incentivize alliances with opposition parties, either to secure victory if the autocrat's access to fraud is limited or to remove potential protest leaders. Insofar as these alliances require ministerial or bureaucratic appointments that would otherwise be directed to in-group members, nominally democratic institutions reduce ζ. Accordingly, the autocrat's commitment to recruit from the in-group is less credible, requiring a higher b^D to secure in-group loyalty. The strategy is then much less attractive for the autocrat.

Finally, the autocrat's disposable income conditions the results in Proposition 1 in two ways. First, by rendering power more dear, the autocrat is willing to spend more to retain it. Hence increases in state revenue R increase the revenue sharing allocation b^{D*}. Second, more affluent autocrats are also able to fund more regime portfolios, measured by γ. As the number of regime portfolios rises, so

too does the value of in-group membership to elites. There are, simply, more portfolios to occupy, increasing the probability an elite does so. The autocrat expands the in-group accordingly.

The autocrat, then, has his preferences over in-group size, and they are malleable. Indeed, there is no reason *ex ante* that they should correspond to ethnicity. But elites have their preferences as well, and they will often conflict with the autocrats. Indeed, truncating the labor market is a decisive issue for regime elites. Excluded elites obviously dislike it. Since they are shut out from regime largesse, they engage in anti-regime activity with virtual certainty. Elites included in the effective pool of candidates, however, have strong incentives to avoid expansion. For since labor market expansion strictly reduces their probability of receiving an appointment, they are made strictly worse off as the effective pool of candidates increases.

3.3 In-Group Formation and Elite Behavior

Proposition 1 teaches us that autocrats construct in-groups not to secure the loyalties of their appointees. Rather, by creating a "politics of hope," in-groups secure the loyalties of member elites who aspire to appointment in the future. By discriminating against some, autocrats create higher *ex ante* probabilities of appointment for others, yielding strong incentives to abstain from anti-regime behavior *regardless* of whether they benefit directly from the regime. Moreover, we learned that nominally democratic institutions render in-groups more difficult to sustain, since they often require political alliances that force autocrats to recruit elsewhere.

Proposition 1 thus compels us to return to Congo in search of new patterns.

3.3.1 The Effect of In-Group Membership on Elite Behavior

To probe how in-group membership conditions anti-regime behavior, I estimate three statistical models. First, I consider whether in-group elites *who are excluded from the regime* engage in less

anti-regime behavior than elites outside the in-group. The second asks whether in-group elites, once appointed to the regime, behavior differently than members of the out-group who nonetheless – for whatever reason – received appointments. Finally, I consider whether in-group elites, having been removed from the regime and with little hope of reappointment, behave differently than out-group elites after their termination.

To measure anti-regime activity, I record all instances when elites challenged Sassou Nguesso's hold on power. I define "challenge" in two ways. First, I record all participants in nascent *coup d'état* conspiracies. There have been three legitimate conspiracies since Sassou Nguesso reclaimed power in 1997, cumulatively involving 15 regime elites; I withhold information about these to protect these individuals and their families. I uncovered these conspiracies based on extensive key informant interviews throughout the country, always with individuals who knew the conspirators well and possessed direct knowledge of the conspiracies. Throughout my field work I was aware that my informants could use the project as a means for "score settling." By implicating their politics enemies, perhaps, my informants could advance their political careers or exact revenge for past misdeeds. Hence each recorded conspiracy was independently verified by three sources. While imperfect, this reporting requirement sets a high threshold for inclusion. I omitted several conspiracies of which I am not absolutely certain.

Nascent conspiracies are not the only ways that elites challenge Sassou Nguesso's hold on power. My research suggests at least three others. First, given France's long influence throughout francophone Africa and Sassou Nguesso's dependence on the French oil companies that dominate Pointe-Noire, he is particularly sensitive to his standing among the French government. The Congolese opposition knows this, and occasionally asks the French president to publicly sanction Sassou Nguesso, advance the ongoing judicial investigation into Sassou Nguesso's real estate holdings on French soil, implement economic sanctions, or emulate American regime change in Iraq. The dataset includes roughly 25 such instances, including this particularly well known letter to President Jacques Chirac

in June 2000:

> On June 5, 1997, Denis Sassou Nguesso, former president of the republic, disavowed by the Congolese people during the first round of the 1992 presidential election, launched the most bloody, most destructive, and longest *coup d'état* in the history of our country.[71]

Second, since *coups d'état* require multiple conspirators – the new regime, of course, must actually govern the country – elites tacitly signal their interest in regime change by disparaging Sassou Nguesso, either privately or publicly. I gather these statements from a combination of key informant interviews and the archives of Brazzaville's two most prominent, non-government newspapers. Indeed, I deliberately excluded the government's sponsored news sources. Since autocrats have historically sought to discredit regime officials by anonymously disparaging them in government newspapers [52, 128], this exclusion helps me avoid the possibility that these printed accusations are fictitious.[72] These sorts of statements often sound like this one, delivered to a small crowd of supporters by Colonel Marcel Ntsourou on March 3, 2014, during his 50th birthday celebration:

> In the history of any collective, my dear brothers, each generation must assume its place in history, whatever the price; for otherwise the fate of the collective itself will be threatened. I will accomplish my duty to you all .... I remind you that a people survives across history only by its own will, and never by the will of others. I remind you also that everything has its limit, even fear itself must have its limits. ...Nature requires of men a constant offensive to gain their ideals; even confronted with the impossible and with danger, one must advance. Victory belongs to the audacious,

[71] See *La Semaine Africaine*, 22 June 2000.

[72] The government newspaper, *Les Dépêches de Brazzaville*, does not generally print such activities anyway, since it prefers to maintain the appear of universal support for the regime.

> those who refuse to retreat.[73]

The next day he launched a coup.

Finally, elites foment and stoke popular frustration with the regime by disparaging Sassou Nguesso's democratic credentials or accusing him – or his very top lieutenants – of gross economic mismanagement. Elites makes these statements during political rallies to their supporters, and they are almost always covered by Congo's local journalists and printed in a handful of intrepid local newspapers.

> You see how the Libyans fought, how many lives were sacrificed, to put an end to the reign of Khadafi, who had practically a clan-based management. I don't know if, here in Congo, the government is clan-based. That is for you to decide. Khadafi had already prepared his children to take power. And under other skies, people do exactly the same thing. People call this democracy. But it's really dictatorship. And I think we can learn from [the Libyans]. ...It has become practically the preparation for a monarchical regime.

The assembled crowd understood that Clément Mierassa was calling for an Arab Spring style revolution, modeled, indeed, after the one that drove Khadafi from power. Indeed, following the speech, one young man said this:

> Calling on us to march sounds good. But the problem is that [the regime] will open fire on us.[74]

Opposition politicians or civil society leaders may, of course, craft their statements to increase the probability they are co-opted by the regime: that their silence should be purchased for some healthy sum. But even this interpretation makes clear that the statements are designed to stoke popular

[73] http://www.mampouya.com/article-marcel-ntsourou-meme-la-peur-doit-avoir-ses-limites-105817066.html

[74] See *La Semaine Africaine*, 4 October 2011.

unrest. These statements are relatively common in Congo, and hence they constitute the bulk of the dataset. They occurred in nearly 2, 500 elite-years, or roughly 15% of the dataset.

The models control for a variety of individual level characteristics that might condition anti-regime behavior: Mbochi co-ethnicity; membership in Sassou Nguesso's family, concubine network, PCT political party, or freemasonry lodge; general rank, Kouilou or Likouala origins, the population of elite *i*'s native region, and whether elite *i* served in the 1997 civil war. Since the outcomes are dichotomous – either elite *i* engaged in anti-regime activity in year *t* or did not – all models are estimated with the logit function. To accommodate the possibility that anti-regime activity was more common in some years than others, I also include year fixed effects.

The statistical results appear in Table 3.2 and are visualized in Figure 3.11. They are strikingly consistent with the theory in Section 3.2. The left column of Figure 3.11 reports the predicted probability that elite *i* engages in anti-regime activity *prior to appointment* – or, indeed, if never appointed – as a function of his membership in Sassou Nguesso's in-group. It suggests that elites whose birth villages are far from Oyo engage in anti-regime activity with probability 0.12. For elites comfortably inside the geographic in-group, this probability falls by nearly half, to 0.7. In short, challenging Sassou Nguesso is relatively rare. As discussed in subsequent chapters, he enjoys a robust security apparatus, employs a series of monitoring devices against appointees, and systematically targets opposition politicians for electoral alliances. But challenge him elites occasionally do. They are much less likely to do so, however, if they stand a reasonably good chance – due to the location of their birth village – of being appointed later. Why disqualify themselves from subsequent appointment when the probability of revolution is so low?

The center column of Figure 3.11 reports the predicted probability that elite *i* engages in anti-regime activity *during appointment* as a function of his membership in the in-group. During appointment, it suggests, membership in the in-group has no effect on anti-regime activity. Members and non-members alike engage in anti-regime activity with a probability of but 0.6. This is intu-

Table 3.2: The Effect of Labor Market Truncation on Elite Behavior

	Pre-Appointment Logit	During Appointment Logit	Post-Appointment Logit
Oyo Distance	0.003*	0.001	-0.000
	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.007)
Mbochi Co-Ethnicity	-1.094**	0.781	21.75
	(0.414)	(0.556)	(4507.0)
Family	2.300*	0.326	
	(0.967)	(0.587)	
Concubine Network	-2.688*	-17.50	-18.67
	(1.118)	(2129.0)	(7498.0)
General	-0.537†	-0.541	-12.28
	(0.311)	(0.512)	(5487.0)
Kouilou Native	-2.682**	-1.008	1.616
	(0.405)	(1.160)	(2.041)
Likouala Native	1.989*	1.535**	-17.67
	(0.819)	(0.560)	(3632.0)
PCT or Allied Party	-3.384**	-37.34	-6.714**
	(0.219)	(3529.0)	(1.577)
Native Region Population	0.012	0.648	-0.198
	(0.221)	(0.560)	(1.987)
Civil War Veteran	1.877**	0.620	3.643**
	(0.617)	(0.393)	(1.148)
GLC Member	-10.44	-1.087**	-0.981
	(407.6)	(0.420)	(1.854)
Mid Level Appointment		-0.035†	
		(0.486)	
High Level Appointment		-1.057**	
		(0.569)	
Catchment			
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	1345	1992	205

Significance levels: † : 10% * : 5% ** : 1%

itive. For once appointed, all are equally vulnerable to Sassou Nguesso's punishment: immediate termination, the focus of Chapter 6, with all the attendant financial consequences. Perhaps more importantly, the results in the left and center columns suggest that Sassou Nguesso induces in-group elites who gain nothing from the regime to behave *as if* they do. Discrimination incentivizes non-appointees to behave *as if* they were appointees; they engage in anti-regime activity with virtually identical probabilities. This null finding, moreover, is not an artifact of greater uncertainty, for the model correctly predicts nearly 96% of observations.

The right column reports the predicted probability that elite *i* engages in anti-regime activity *after* having been removed from the regime. For as discussed in Chapter 6, Sassou Nguesso assiduously rewards loyalty with reappointment, and quickly disciplines disloyalty with termination. With such a rational reappointment policy, Sassou Nguesso almost never removes elites from the regime only to reappoint them several years hence. Elites knows this, and hence – if the theory is correct – membership in the geographic in-group should have virtually no effect on elite behavior after termination. This, indeed, is exactly what Figure 3.11 suggests. Following termination, in-group and out-group elites engage in anti-regime behavior with probability 10% and 11%, respectively; though the confidence intervals are larger, owing to the fewer observations, the point estimates are again virtually identical. With very little chance of being reappointed after termination, elites in the geographic in-group have as little to gain from loyalty to the regime as elites in the out-group. This model also performs relatively well, correctly predicting some 94% of observations.

3.3.2 The Evolution of In-Group Size

Finally, I return to Congo for evidence of the model's second key observable implication: that Sassou Nguesso's commitment to a geographic in-group has declined during major electoral years and increased during periods of affluence.

To probe this, I reestimate the models in Figure 3.6, but for each year since Sassou Nguesso's 1997

return.[75] This accommodates the possibility that, in constructing his coalition, Sassou Nguesso weighted in-group membership differently in different years. As above, I control for a range of individual-level characteristics in all models: whether elite *i* is a relative of Sassou Nguesso or a member of his concubine network, military general, native of Kouilou or Likouala, member of the PCT, civil war veteran, former Lissouba minister, the population of elite *i*'s native region, and whether elite *i* held an appointment in year $t - 1$. I also include year fixed effects to accommodate unobserved features of particular years.

The patterns of statistical significance for both models in all years are broadly similar to those in Table 3.1: The geographic proximity of elite *i*'s birth village to Oyo – rather than his co-ethnicity with Sassou Nguesso – is critical to his probability of appointment.[76] Figures 3.12 and 3.13 visualize the predicted probabilities that members of the geographic in- and out-groups occupy mid-level civilian and high-level positions, respectively, in the regime. Although neither is conclusive – data limitations produce relatively broad confidence intervals – both are suggestive. And, indeed, both tell similar stories.

As Section 3.1 suggested, Sassou Nguesso constructed a government immediately upon seizing power, the core of which was confined to a narrow segment of the population. Geographically distant elites only begrudgingly received the regime's most sensitive, lucrative positions, and they fared only somewhat better in mid-level positions. As 2002 approached – a year that featured a constitutional referendum in February, a presidential election in March, and legislative elections in July – Sassou Nguesso's preference for a geographically concentrated elite fell precipitously. Whereas immediately after the 1997 war elites from Oyo's environs enjoyed a roughly 40% probability of being selected for a mid-level position in the civilian apparatus, in 2002 this fell to less than 25%. As astute observers of Congolese politics recognized at the time, Sassou Nguesso chose to distribute regime

[75] For data purposes, I first restrict attention to mid-level appointments in the civilian apparatus. The second model aggregates high level positions across the civilian and security apparatuses.

[76] Since there are 30 models, they appear in an online appendix.

portfolios more broadly, part of a broad effort to construct a compelling electoral coalition. This expansion did not, however, extend to the most sensitive positions in the regime, as Figure 3.13 makes clear. Even as elections approached, Sassou Nguesso continued to construct a regime core that was almost entirely drawn from Oyo and environs; in 1997, elites from Oyo's surrounding villages enjoyed a roughly 12% probability of being appointed to a critical regime post, and by 2001, on the eve of the elections, the probability had risen to roughly 20%.

Sassou Nguesso's preference for a geographically concentrated elite returned immediately following the 2002 elections. Indeed, the steady increases in the marginal effects of geographic proximity on mid- and high level appointment suggest that Sassou Nguesso's commitment to a geographic in-group has only strengthened. As later chapters make clear, this coincided with a number of other trends. Congo's oil production rose, enabling Sassou Nguesso to siphon more from the treasury. His parallel government apparatus and freemasonry lodge grew accordingly. Opposition leaders, with less chance of winning elections, were unable to resist Sassou Nguesso's electoral alliance offers. And Sassou Nguesso traveled abroad at will. Disentangling the precise chain of causality is difficult. But these indicators suggest that, as Sassou Nguesso's position has become more secure, he has preferred a far more geographically concentrated elite.

3.4 Conclusion

When he reclaimed power in 1997, this chapter finds, Sassou Nguesso recruited for his regime's most critical, most lucrative positions based largely on the interests of those outside looking in. By defining the pool of candidates according to geography and awarding appointees a substantial wage premium, Sassou Nguesso created a "politics of hope." In so doing, he induced the support of elites included in the in-group but excluded from the regime. As Section 3.3 makes clear, Sassou Nguesso compelled them to behave *as if* they were members of the regime, since they *believed* he served their

interests better than his rivals. Having relied on a civilian and military apparatus to secure victory in the civil war, his recruitment in the early years was constrained. But as his access to state revenue expanded around the 2002 presidential election and the relevance of cross-regional alliances declined, he redoubled his commitment to the geographic in-group.

Shrewd though it was, this account risks simplifying Sassou Nguesso's accomplishments. For even after he populated his regime, he had still to monitor his appointees, who gained fresh access to state revenue and weapons. More, he lacked the institutional monitoring devices afforded by an effective state bureaucracy, as well as the recourse to fear enjoyed by autocrats who can employ violence freely. Chapter 4 explores Sassou Nguesso's response.

MESSAGES

Message des Vœux de Nouvel An de Monsieur le Député-Maire de Brazzaville à Son Excellence Denis SASSOU NGUESSO, Président de la République du Congo, Citoyen d'Honneur de la ville de Brazzaville

Le Député Maire de Brazzaville, les membres du Bureau Exécutif du Conseil, ainsi que les Conseillers départementaux et municipaux de la Commune de Brazzaville, présentent leurs meilleurs vœux de santé, de bonheur et de prospérité à Son Excellence **Denis SASSOU NGUESSO**, Président de la République du Congo, Citoyen d'Honneur de la ville de Brazzaville, à son épouse, Mme Antoinette **SASSOU NGUESSO**, ainsi qu'à toute sa famille, pour l'An 2012.

Puisse cette année nouvelle apporter à la République du Congo, encore plus de succès dans toutes les entreprises engagées sous votre gouvernance éclairée, pour la mise en œuvre victorieuse de votre programme de société "Le Chemin d'Avenir", gage de l'essor industriel, économique et social du Congo, notre cher et beau pays.

Le Conseil Départemental et Municipal de la Commune de Brazzaville reste fermement convaincu que sous votre houlette, notre pays deviendra une terre d'opportunités, pour rejoindre à moyen terme le cercle privé des pays émergents du continent africain.

Le Président du Conseil Départemental et Municipal, Député-Maire de Brazzaville

Hugues NGOUELONDELE.

Message de Vœux de Nouvel An à Son Excellence Monsieur Denis SASSOU-N'GUESSO, Président de la République, et Madame

Excellence Monsieur le Président de la République, à l'aurore de la Nouvelle Année, nous venons, très respectueusement, au nom des populations de la Première Circonscription de Tié-Tié, à Pointe-Noire, et en notre nom personnel, vous présenter, à vous même et à votre chère Epouse, Mme Antoinette SASSOU-N'GUESSO, nos Meilleurs Vœux de bonheur, de santé et de paix.

Puisse 2012 apporter son lot de succès aux réalisations du «Chemin d'Avenir», comme nous venons de le vivre au mois de Décembre 2011, à Dolisie, avec l'inauguration de la Route lourde Pointe Noire/Dolisie, le lancement des travaux du deuxième tronçon Dolisie/Brazzaville, et à Pointe-Noire, avec l'inauguration de la Centrale Electrique du Congo et le lancement des travaux du siège du Port Autonome et du deuxième module de l'aérogare.

Le couple présidentiel lors d'une cérémonie à Pointe-Noire

A notre appel, les populations de la Première Circonscription de Tié-Tié restent mobilisées dans leur écrasante majorité, pour soutenir votre action à la tête du pays, comme elles l'ont démontré, en vous réservant un accueil chaleureux et enthousiaste, lors de votre séjour de travail à Pointe-Noire.

Le Député Gaëtan Ntodia.

Honorable
Gaëtan N'KODIA
Député de la Première Circonscription de Tié-Tié

LA SEMAINE AFRICAINE N° 3157 Mardi 10 Janvier 2012 - PAGE 4

Figure 3.2: A typical congratulatory message to Sassou Nguesso. This one appeared in the pages of *La Semaine Africaine* in January 2012.

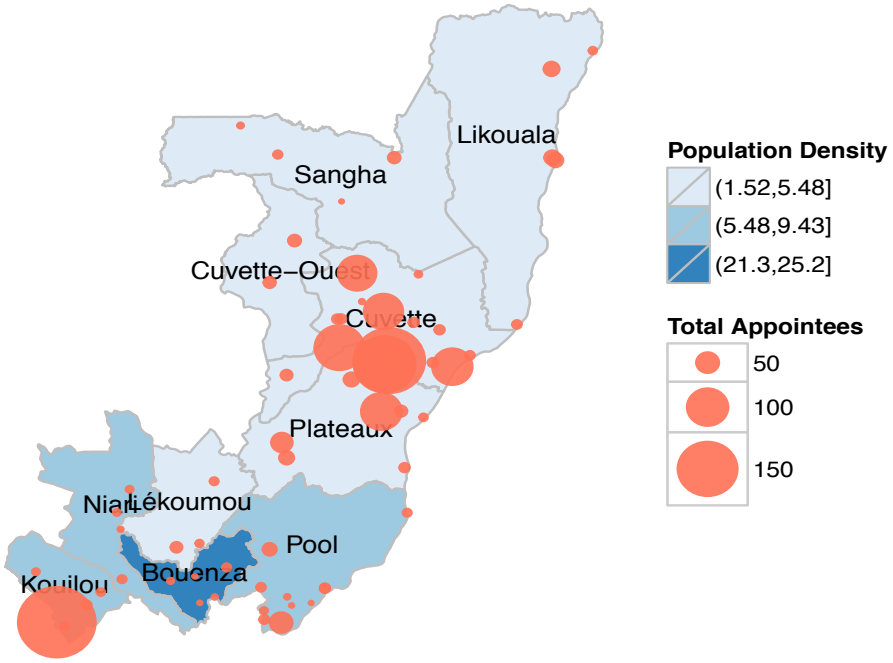

Figure 3.3: Sassou Nguesso's mid and high level political appointees, by the location of their home villages. Regions are shaded according to their population density.

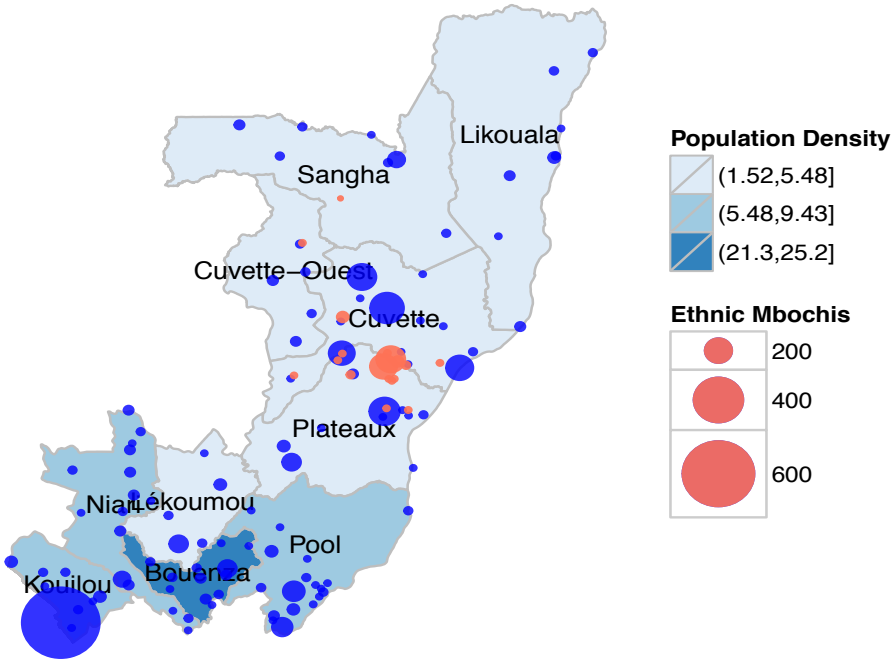

Figure 3.4: The birth villages of Sassou Nguesso's Mbochi co-ethnics appear in coral, while the birth villages of ethnic non-Mbochis appear in blue.

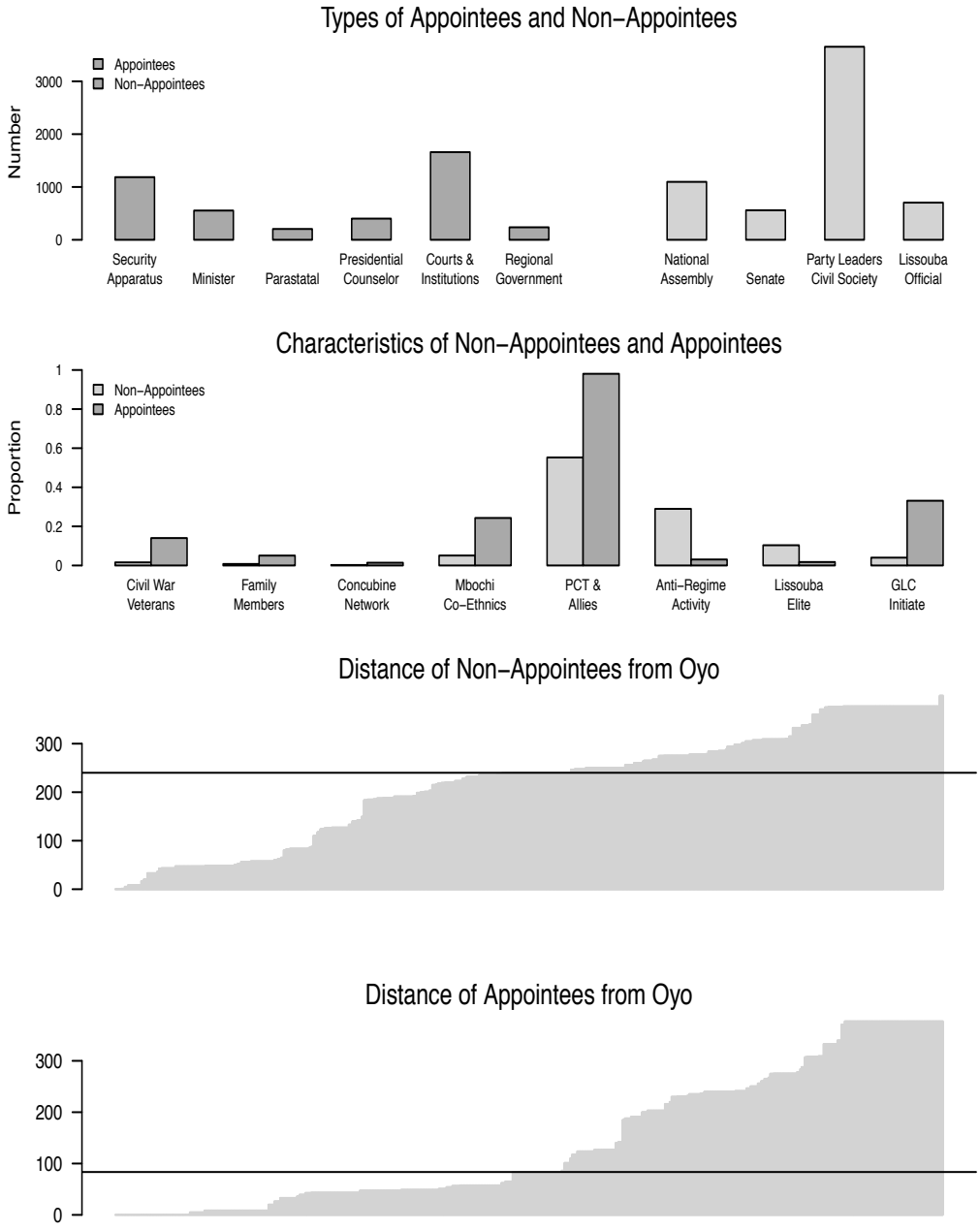

Figure 3.5: The first panel records demographic and political characteristics of GLC initiates and non-initiates in 2011. The bottom three panels display the distribution home villages to Oyo, Sassou Nguesso's home village; the mean distance is given by the horizontal lines.

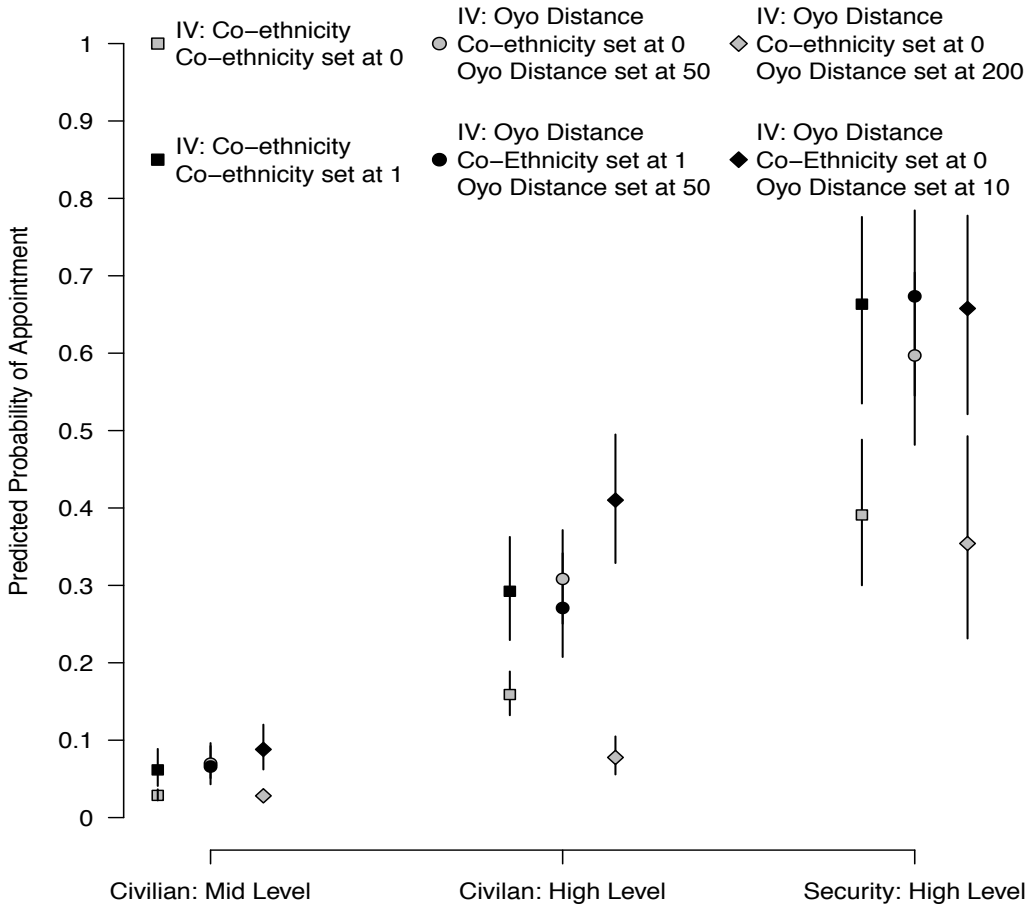

Figure 3.6: The predicted probabilities that elite i receives a mid or high level appointment in the civilian apparatus , or receives a high level appointment in the military apparatus, in year t. Simulations for mid level civilian appointments are computed assuming that elite i did not hold a regime appointment in year $t-1$. Since it is relatively uncommon for an elite to receive a high level appointment without occupying a low or mid level appointment the previous year, the simulations for high level appointments are computed assuming that elite i held some regime appointment in year $t-1$.

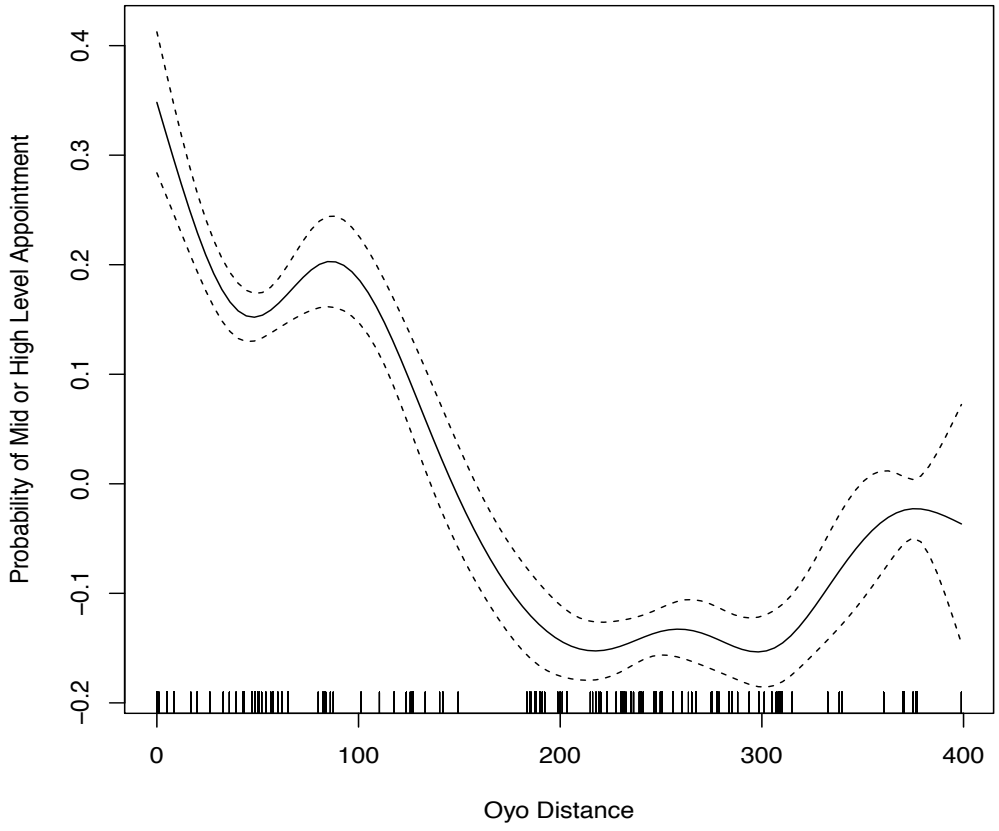

Figure 3.7: A non-parametric estimate of the effect of geographic proximity on the probability of appointment, controlling for Mbochi co-ethnicity.

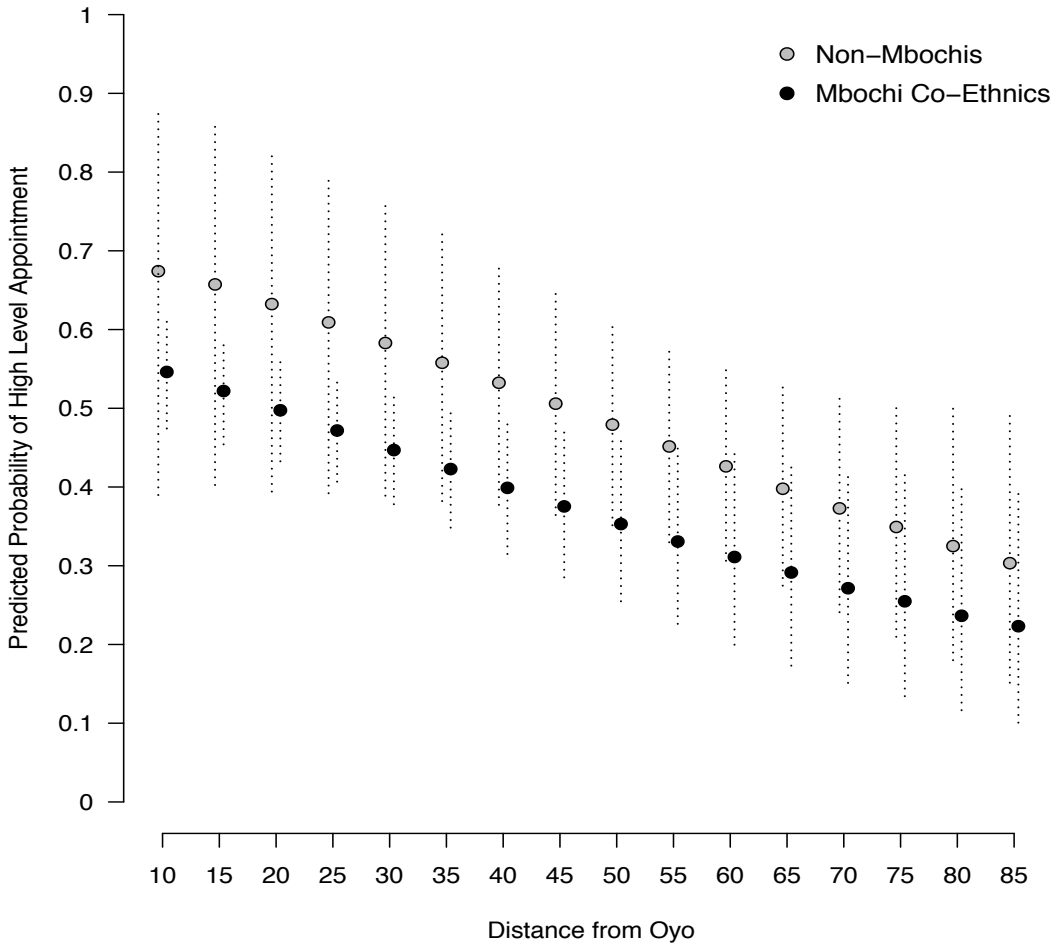

Figure 3.8: The effect of geographic proximity and Mbochi co-ethnicity within the in-group.

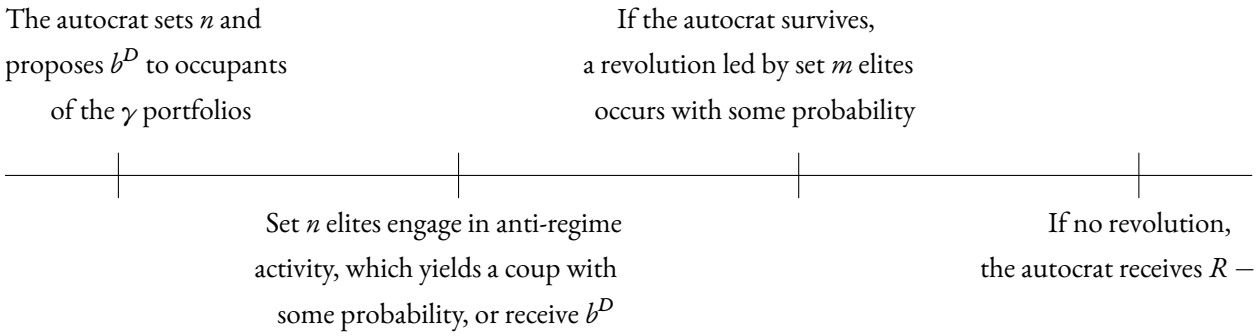

Figure 3.9: Timing of the recruitment game.

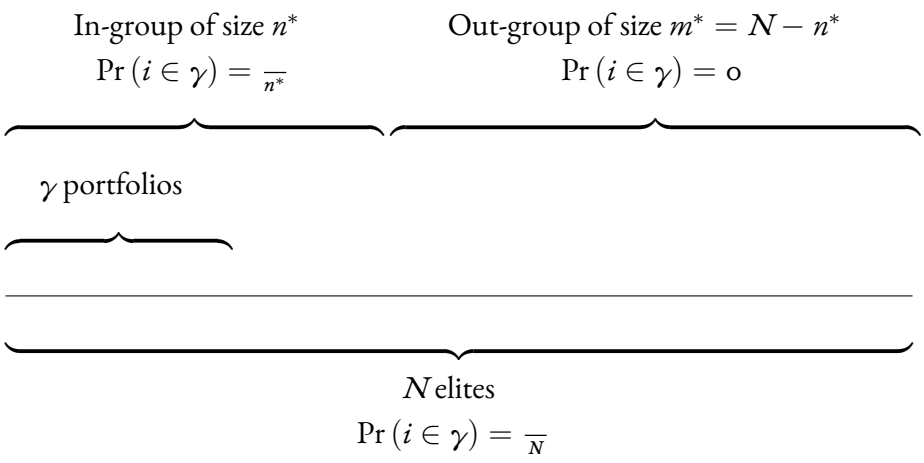

Figure 3.10: Proposition 1 visualized.

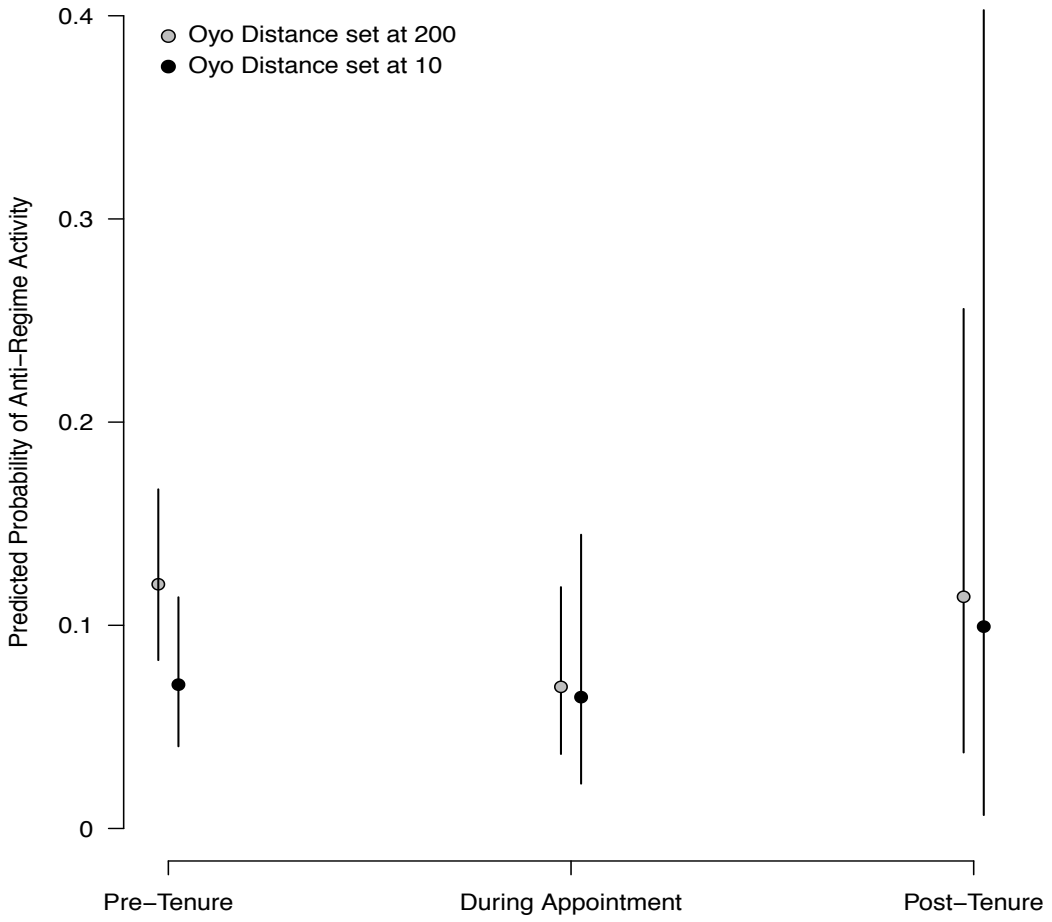

Figure 3.11: The predicted probabilities that members of the in-group and the out-group – after termination and with little hope for reappointment – engage in anti-regime activity in year *t*. The predicted probabilities are based on the results in Table 3.2.

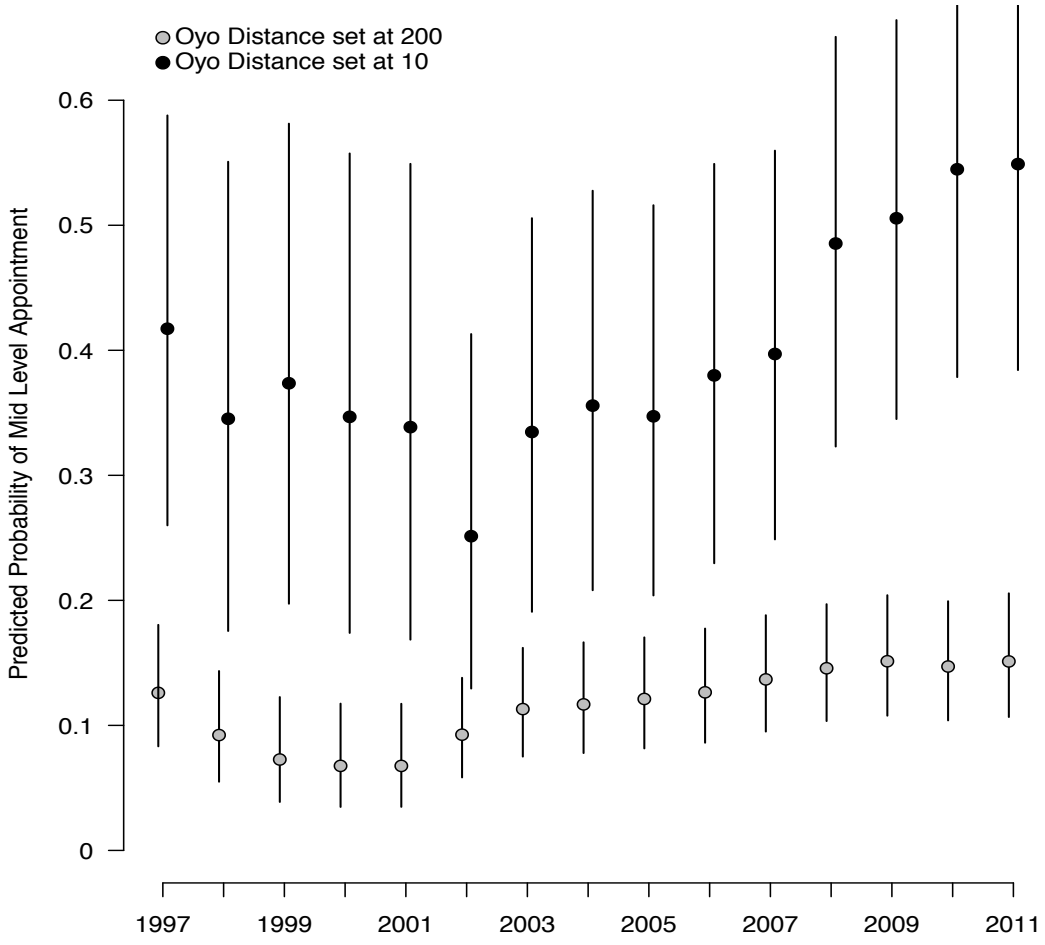

Figure 3.12: The Effect of Shifting `Oyo Distance` from 300 Miles to 25 Miles on the Probability of Mid Level Appointment

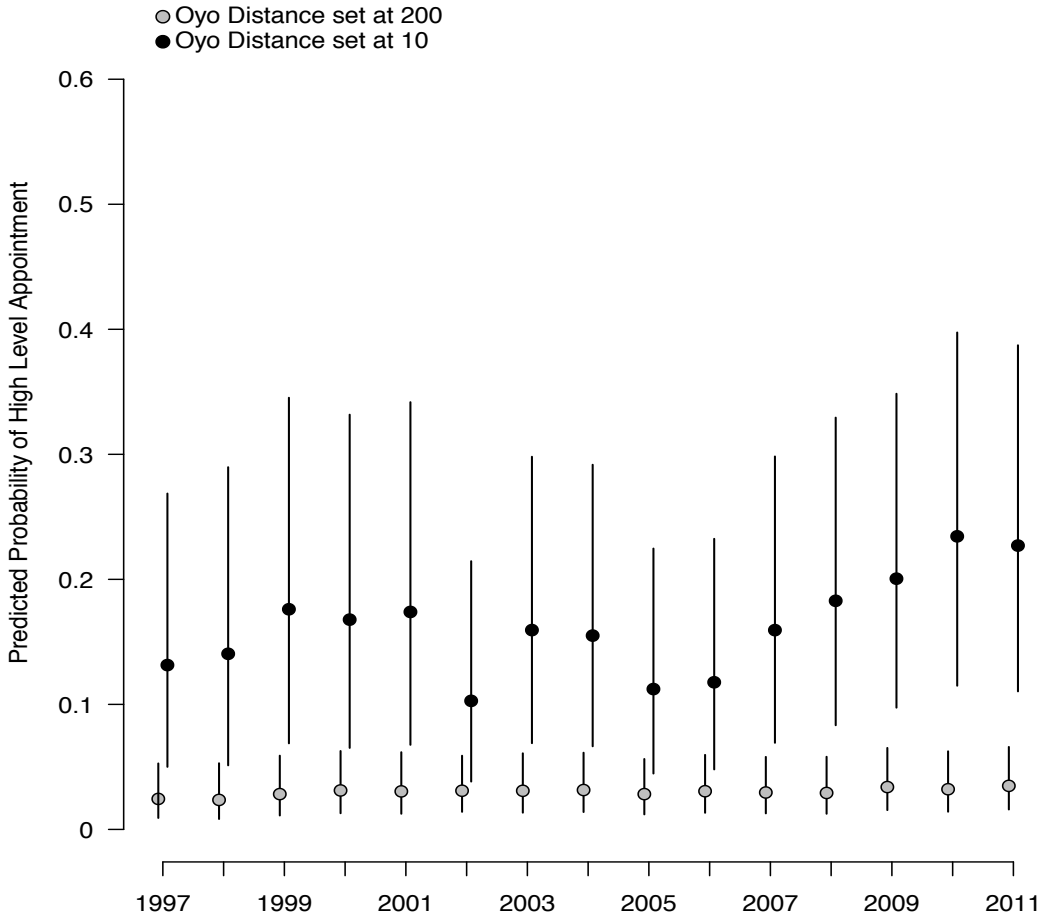

Figure 3.13: The Effect of Shifting `Oyo Distance` from 300 Miles to 25 Miles on the Probability of High Level Appointment

4

Compliance Without Monitoring,

2002-2005

It's a shadow government. Some counselors are even more important than ministers.

– Wilfried Kivouvou.[1]

[1]Interview, 16 June 2013. Kivouvou is a former Administrator General of Africa Oil and Gas Corporation, which figures prominently in the story that follows.

Jay Newman is a senior portfolio manager at Kensington International, a New York investment firm on the 35th floor of a prominent Fifth Avenue skyscraper. Newman is also among Sassou Nguesso's chief nemeses. Between 1998 and 2000 he purchased a series of debts for $0.07 on the dollar, ultimately cobbling together $120 million of distressed debt for less than $20 million [102, 154]. In 2002, as Sassou Nguesso "legitimized" his military victory with fraudulent elections, Newman obtained a series of judgments in London courts that validated his claims [51]. Newman's investments would prove lucrative only if Sassou Nguesso could be forced to pay. So when Sassou Nguesso challenged their claims in New York and London courts, Newman dispatched private investigators – mostly former CIA agents – across the globe for evidence of Sassou Nguesso's graft [154].

Newman's investigation cost millions of dollars, but its results were staggering. In August 2006 alone son Denis Christel spent €35, 000 at Louis Vuitton, Roberto Cavalli, and other designer boutiques [79].[2] During a visit to New York in September 2005, Sassou Nguesso settled his bill for 26 rooms at the Palace Hotel with $100 banknotes; he stayed in the "Triplex," a three story, marble floored suite that, at $8, 500 per night, cost the country $81, 000 [11]. To undermine Sassou Nguesso's campaign for debt relief, Newman leaked this information to Global Witness, a British NGO, which promptly issued a series of scathing reports [143, 154]. They received so much attention that Paul Wolfowitz, then president of the World Bank, vocally opposed Congo's petition for debt relief. Newman's Kensington International is often derided as a "vulture fund," but he found allies in Congo. Brice Mackosso, head of *Publish What You Pay*'s Pointe-Noire office, said this:

> If it were not for these vulture funds, we would not know any facts about the way our country□s wealth is being taken away. We don□t agree with their ultimate aims, but they are the only ones capable of exposing the truth [146].

The revelations were so embarrassing – and at such a sensitive time – that Sassou Nguesso ulti-

[2] I will post these on my personal website upon publication.

mately settled. While most vulture funds received settlements worth $0.55 on the dollar, Newman settled his claims for some $90 million [154].

Newman's lawsuits enabled him to seize SNPC oil at will [155]. To circumvent the rulings, Sassou Nguesso created a series of shell companies that could be linked to neither him nor the Congolese government. Sassou Nguesso was forced, in short, to delegate the sale of Congolese oil to his agents. The owners of at least 11 shell companies – Elenga Investment, Hemisphere Ventures, Long Beach Investments, Montrow International, Sphynx Bermuda, Sphynx UK, Africa Oil and Gas Corporation, Phenicia, Pan Africa, Orion Investments, and Likouala SA – would purchase SNPC oil at 10% or 20% below market price and then sell it on the open market, often to major traders like Glencore, British Petroleum, and Gunvor [77, 78, 79, 51, 86, 41, 129]. The profits went directly into bank accounts in Brazzaville, Geneva, and Hong Kong, all controlled by Sassou Nguesso allies and relatives.

Sassou Nguesso must delegate virtually everything. He can neither ensure his own personal security nor that of Brazzaville. He cannot run his various ministries, even the most important among them. He cannot manage his own propaganda apparatus. More, Sassou Nguesso can hardly monitor those who do. Government ministers appoint their own chiefs of staff and senior aides, typically old friends from their native villages. Their fortunes intertwined, they often have stronger incentives to enrich themselves at the expense of the regime – to siphon state revenue, ministerial budgets, or weapons caches – than serve it with complete faith. Even when Sassou Nguesso's appointees may not wish to overthrow the regime, their personal interests often diverge from it in ways that render Sassou Nguesso's hold on power less secure and less lucrative. "Ministers sometimes do shady things," one prominent member of the Sassou Nguesso family told me. "They must be monitored."[3]

Sassou Nguesso knows this. Though his monitoring technologies are imperfect, he deploys them nonetheless. Virtually all of Sassou Nguesso's ministers – wherever their ministries are located –

[3]Interview with Anonymous, 27 March 2013.

occupy offices in the Elf Tower, a 30-floor structure inaugurated in 1990 and designed to dwarf the Kinshasa skyline. Recently rebranded the *Tour Nabemba*, the building costs nearly $6 million per year just to air condition [98]. The building is also thoroughly bugged, or so its occupants believe.[4] So cautious are Sassou Nguesso's ministers that they routinely schedule sensitive meetings – even with Western researchers – at their personal residences. Like his late son-in-law Omar Bongo [162], virtually all *Brazzavillois* believe that Sassou Nguesso maintains extensive intelligence files, which document his appointees' illicit activities for eventual blackmail [131]. The Western diplomatic community, for its part, believes the recent influx of employees at Brazzaville's Chinese embassy serves primarily to strengthen the country's electronic surveillance apparatus.[5]

This chapter explains how Sassou Nguesso constructed his government to compel appointees to comply with his interests, *even when* their personal interests diverged from his and he lacked the ability to monitor them effectively. Its central argument is that Sassou Nguesso built a parallel government: a set of advisors who shadow formal appointees, discharge the same responsibilities, and ultimately compete for the autocrat's favor. Earlier, autocrats could simply terrorize their appointees into compliance. Joseph Stalin's "Great Purge," Conquest [50] and Lskavyan [113] teach us, was a rational – if unimaginably violent – means to compel appointees to denounce their counterparts' malfeasance. Rafael Trujillo, Crassweller [52] writes, employed a fearsome secret police to similar effect. Yet modern autocrats must generate compliance with limited recourse to violence. For the international community's insistence on human rights norms in exchange for foreign aid and investment – and, indeed, their willingness to provide asylum to high profile defectors – limits the violence that modern autocrats can credibly threaten [57]. As a result, modern autocrats incentivize compliance by fostering competition.

Section 4.1 presents an analytical history of three sectors of Sassou Nguesso's government: oil,

[4] Interviews with Adelaïde Mougany and François Sita, 4 April 2012.
[5] Interview with Christopher Murray, 25 November 2011.

military, and communications. It documents the competitions that animate each, and that have enabled Sassou Nguesso to consolidate his authority. Section 4.2 explores the dynamics of elite competition with the aid of a game theoretic model. It suggests two necessary conditions to render the technique effective. First, the autocrat must ensure that competitions do not devolve into cycles of denunciation and counter-denunciation. He must be able to divine truth from noise. Second, paired elites must not collude: to surreptitiously agree to cheat the autocrat *in the same way*, which would render malfeasance undetectable. Section 4.3 presents statistical evidence that explains how Sassou Nguesso accomplishes both.

4.1 Consolidating Authority and Elite Competition

4.1.1 The Security Apparatus

Oof the seven key members of the Brazzaville Cobra headquarters, four were Likouala natives: Yves Motando, Noël Leonard Essongo, Gilbert Mokoki, and Jean Marie Tassoua. These commanders enjoyed both the loyalty of their soldiers and easy access to weapons. Although Sassou Nguesso was eager to dismiss them in favor of Oyo natives – the geographic in-group, per Chapter 3 – he was constrained. Sassou Nguesso created a parallel government within the security apparatus in response to these constraints.

Having overseen the civil war effort from Brazzaville,[6] Motando was appointed military chief of staff. He was seconded, however, by Prosper Konta Mokono, a native of Pool whose whose record of loyalty to Sassou Nguesso was long and unimpeachable. When Sassou Nguesso dispatched a battalion in 1987 to capture Pierre Anga in the forests outside Owando, Mokono was among the two or three leading FAC officers. The mission itself was extraordinarily dangerous. A notoriously courageous soldier, Anga defended himself for 30 minutes, a machine gun in each hand. Mokono

[6] *La Lettre du Continent*, 30 October 1997.

had patiently awaited his turn atop the military hierarchy for years, and he aspired to the position Motando now held.

FAC chief of staff Motando may have been. But the full security apparatus was overseen by Jean Dominique Okemba, widely known simply as JDO and often regarded as *de facto* vice president.[7] Sassou Nguesso's nephew and an admiral in the Congolese navy, Okemba is widely viewed as the second most powerful person in the country. A *conseiller special* for security since 1997, Sassou Nguesso appointed Okemba secretary general of the newly created *Conseil National de Securité* in 2002, a body concerned far more with domestic threats to the president than with external threats to national security. His mandate is broader than any other member of Sassou Nguesso's inner circle. He presides over the *Grande Loge du Congo*, Sassou Nguesso's freemasonry lodge and the subject of Chapter 5. He is chairman of BGFI Congo, successor to Elf's discredited FIBA and home to SNPC's bank account and those of its shell companies. The perch enables him to monitor virtually all major financial transactions in the country.[8] As of 2009 Okemba was also the only person who could access the president's personal treasury.[9] When Sassou Nguesso transferred millions of euros to fund Jacques Chirac's political campaigns between 1995 and 2005, Okemba delivered the suitcases of cash [13]. He is regarded as the leader of the paternal – Nguesso – side of the family.

Like Okemba, Hilaire Moko is both a Sassou Nguesso nephew and an admiral in the Congolese navy. During the 1997 war Moko directed the rear headquarters, based in Oyo, which coordinated weapons shipments from Europe and secured the Brazzaville supply line [177]. Following the war, Moko was named head of the *Direction Generale de la Securité Presidentielle* (DGSP). Along with the *Garde Republicaine* – more accurately, the Presidential Guard – the DGSP reports directly to Sassou Nguesso, is recruited almost exclusively from Oyo, and trains in the forests of Tsambitso. Yet the DGSP is even more important than the Presidential Guard. For while the Presidential Guard

[7] Interview with Anonymous, 27 March 2014. See also *La Lettre du Continent*, 2 September 2004.
[8] *La Lettre du Continent*, 17 June 2010. See also Morison [129].
[9] *La Lettre du Continent*, 22 October 2009.

secures the most sensitive government buildings – the Presidential Palace, Parliament, Central Bank, and Sassou Nguesso's private Brazzaville residence – DGSP soldiers follow Sassou Nguesso wherever his travels take him. Moko represents a different side of the Sassou Nguesso family, and the two are widely acknowledged to compete for their uncle's attention. Indeed, their competition even spilled into Sassou Nguesso's propaganda apparatus, discussed in Section 4.1.3. When Okemba emerged as the principal financier of `www.Congo-Site.com`, Moko forged a closer relationship with Pigasse and *Les Dépêches de Brazzaville*.[10] Hence in 2007, when Okemba discovered Moko was siphoning his subordinates' salaries, he was delighted to report him to their uncle.[11] As punishment, Moko was dispatched to Paris, disgraced, where he served as the embassy's military attaché.[12] And there he stayed until 2011 – in gilded but forced exile – when Sassou Nguesso recalled him to Brazzaville to again supervise his personal security.[13]

Moko was succeeded by Blaise Adoua, who commanded the Presidential Guard from 1997 until 2002 and the Brazzaville Military Zone thereafter. Though an Oyo native, Adoua is not a relative, and he and Okemba shared no particular affinity. Adoua's loyalty, however, was beyond reproach. He was among the very first officers to desert the Lissouba regime – in 1993, just a year after the inauguration – and decamp to Oyo.[14] Adoua's Presidential Guard is widely believed to have orchestrated the Beach Massacre in 1999 [49]. When Sassou Nguesso needed to conduct a show trial to forestall the French investigation, Adoua acquiesced,[15] and was ultimately ordered by the Brazzaville court to pay 85 families – representing a fraction of the 353 killed – some €15,000. Soon after his appointment, Adoua and Okemba engaged in the same sorts of competitions that marked Hoko's tenure. Adoua secured the removal of an Okemba protégé, Judicaël Ndongo, as chief of personal

[10] *La Lettre du Continent*, 27 April 2006.
[11] Interview with Benjamin Moutsila, 6 January 2012.
[12] He also served as commander of the CEMAC multinational force in CAR.
[13] *La Lettre du Continent*, 7 April 2011.
[14] *La Lettre du Continent*, 20 December 2001.
[15] *La Lettre du Continent*, 15 July 2004.

security. Okemba ensured that Adoua was not able to pick Ndongo's replacement. Sassou Nguesso ultimately chose André Obami Itou "fils," son and namesake of the Senate President since its creation in 2002. A Téké from Gamboma, Obami Itou "fils" was a friend of Denis Christel when both were students at Brazzaville's military academy.[16]

The paternal side of Sassou Nguesso's family is based in Oyo; the maternal side hails from Ollombo, across the River Alima from Oyo. Pierre Oba, a cousin, is among the maternal family elders. A general officer, Oba served as director of presidential security in the 1980s and was central to the 1997 war effort. Based in Paris at the unofficial embassy on Avenue Montaigne, Oba coordinated arms shipments between Paris and Oyo.[17] Upon Sassou Nguesso's return, Oba was rewarded with the Ministry of Interior and Security, among the regime's most sensitive ministerial positions. He oversees the National Police, Gendarmerie, Civil Security, and Territorial Surveillance Office (DGST). In 1999 Oba added the Special Unit Command (COMUS) to his portfolio, created to cleanse Ninja rebels from Brazzaville's southern quarters.[18] Dividing the security apparatus across the Defense and Interior Ministries keep the security forces divided. If one unit commits an act of treason, a separate group can check it, deterring the potentially treasonous group in the first place. These divisions extend to the very top of the security hierarchy, as Oba's appointment makes clear. After serving for eight years, Oba was relieved at Okemba's behest in January 2005, shifted to the Ministry of Mines. His successor atop the internal security apparatus: Paul Mbot, a native of the Sangha region and Okemba protégé.

The history of Sassou Nguesso's internal security apparatus must be understood as a struggle between the paternal and maternal families, with Okemba generally prevailing but never conclusively. For the eight years until Oba's release, he was countered by Jean François Ndenguet, since 1997 the General Director of the National Police and an Okemba loyalist; Ndenguet also oversaw the Beach

[16] *La Lettre du Continent*, 23 December 2010.
[17] Interview with Guy Mafimba, 23 December 2011; see also Tassoua [177] and Yengo [192].
[18] Interview with Milan Moïse, 3 August 2010.

massacre [47]. As Oba was shifted, Jean François Okinga and Michel Ombeli, both from the maternal side, secured their ascensions. Okinga was installed as Secretary General of the National Police, while Ombeli received COMUS, the most sensitive of the police units. The *Conseil Nationale de Securité* has much the same history. Okemba's adjoint until 2005 was Patrice Ondélé, also from the maternal side. Okemba ultimately forced Ondélé's departure, though to little avail. For Ondélé's successor was Marcel Ntsourou, a Téké from Plateaux, who has little goodwill towards Okemba's clan.[19]

4.1.2 The Oil Apparatus

Among Sassou Nguesso's first priorities in 1997 was to extend control over Congo's crude oil production. For Hydro-Congo, the state oil company founded in 1973, was in shambles, and virtually entrusted the country's oil to Elf.[20] The European firm controlled exploration, extraction, refinement, and marketing. Under the usual pre-financing agreements, Chapter 2 made clear, Elf simply advanced oil-backed loans, extracted crude from Congolese waters as collateral, and then used Congo's share of the proceeds to pay down its debt [155]. Hydro-Congo was so incompetent that it lacked the capacity to verify Congo's oil receipts [51].

Sassou Nguesso sought to emulate Bongo's SNPG [162]. Rather than relying exclusively on Elf, the new SNPC would oversee upstream activities – production and exploration – and market a share of its own oil. Yet in October 1997, with one very bloody war and five years of political turbulence just concluded, Congo had virtually no domestic expertise in international finance and oil trading.

Born in 1958 near Boundji, some 43 miles from Oyo, Denis Marie Gokana was as comfortable in Paris as in Congo. A nuclear physicist by training, Gokana earned a doctorate from the University of

[19] Interview with Joe Washington Ebina, 16 March 2012.
[20] For background on Hydro-Congo, see [49].

Paris XI in 1986, following which he worked at the French Atomic Energy Commission. He transitioned to Elf in 1988, where he played a central role in the development of the Nkossa oil field [49].[21] He appears to have made Sassou Nguesso's acquaintance during his Paris exile in the 1990s. In addition to his "personal embassy" on Avenue Montaigne, on Boulevard Magenta Sassou Nguesso supported a study group for young Congolese expatriates – almost all from the country's northern reaches – that sought the "restoration of democracy" in Brazzaville [177], a euphemism for Sassou Nguesso's return. Gokana was an occasional participant.[22]

Sensing an opportunity to cash in on his expertise and political connections, Gokana returned to Brazzaville in late 1997. His break came in February 1998, when he was asked by Gerard Bitsindou, a senior minister in Sassou Nguesso's first government and among his few Pool collaborators, to help reorganize Congo's oil industry. This was done by committee. With Bruno Itoua and Serge Ndeko, Gokana proposed the entity that became the SNPC. It was incorporated on April 12, 1998, with Itoua as head, Blaise Elenga as legal counsel, and the Minister of Hydrocarbons, Jean Baptiste Tati-Loutard, overseeing operations. Gokana, for his efforts, was named *conseiller à la presidence*, a presidential counselor. The SNPC UK was created on May 27, 1998, as the company's marketing arm. The SNPC henceforth retained some 30% of Congo's production to sell on the international market. Gokana became SNPC UK's first director on August 3, 1999, and soon thereafter prepared the first model contract for SNPC oil sales, which pre-financing left intact [51, 129]. Gokana was assisted by a Nigerian trader, Dr. Ike Nwobodo, and later Denis Christel.

As in Sassou Nguesso's security apparatus, the two principals of the oil apparatus loathed each other. From opposite sides of Sassou Nguesso's geographic in-group – Itoua's Ollombo and Gokana's Boundji are relatively distant – they had no contact prior to 1998. Each, moreover, sought to be Sassou Nguesso's indispensable oil manager. "There was," as one former aide to Gokana put it, "a lead-

[21] Nkossa came online in 1996.

[22] Interview with Patrick Eric Mampouya, 27 December 2011.

ership problem," with each fashioning himself "most important" and "most competent."[23] Gokana even described Itoua as "tyrannical and totalitarian" to a London court [51]. Their relationship was strikingly similar to that of Moko and Okemba.

In 2001, however, Itoua's standing fell following a series of acrimonious disputes with Total. The SNPC claimed Total owed the government some $500 million for accounting errors made under Lissouba. In retaliation, the SNPC transferred Total's Haute Mer concession to an American company, Murphy Oil [77]. Gokana proposed the resolution [51]. Congo would renounce its $500 million demand if Total rescheduled $197 million of oil-backed debt and transfer its share of the Likouala oil field, just off Pointe-Noire [77]. With the Likouala field's reserves greater than 30 million barrels and Total entitled to 65% of production [156], Total's share was worth nearly $500 million at late 2002 prices. In so doing, Total traded its share of the Likouala oil field for relief from the SNPC's allegations of accounting errors more than five years earlier. The SNPC, in turn, sold its new share of the Likouala oil field to Likouala SA – *société anyonyme* – for a mere $160 million [77]. Likouala SA's owner was Maurice Nguesso, the president's older brother, to whom Total arranged a loan from BNP Paribas to facilitate the purchase [163].[24] A subsequent court case found that Likouala SA "is an alter ego of Congo" [86]. Indeed, the Congolese government conceded as much in a 2003 press statement [78]. At 2009 prices, Likouala SA's share is worth nearly $1.5 billion; its general administrator, as of 2005, was André Bahoumina, a Congolese national and former Total employee, whose salary Total even paid.[25] In essence, Gokana had managed to transfer Congo's national wealth directly to the ruling family and beyond the watchful eyes of international creditors. For his efforts, Gokana was named a *conseiller special*, one of only three, marking his ascension. Gokana was, he acknowledged in a London court, in "a very favored position" [51].

At roughly the same time Congo's creditors got serious about debt collection. In 2001 Congo

[23] Interview with Wilfried Kivouvou, 13 June 2013.
[24] Interview with Benjamin Moutsila, 8 January 2011.
[25] *La Lettre du Continent*, 24 March 2005.

remained the the most indebted country in the world per capita. With a population of but 3.25 million, its total external debt approached $7 billion, or nearly $2, 500 person. Its debt was nearly 250% of gross national income.[26] It also produced nearly $2.5 billion of oil that same year, which has since risen even higher. Most of Congo's private creditors had long relinquished any hope that Sassou Nguesso would repay. So they marketed their debts – worthless pieces of paper, they reasoned – on the international bond market. This act of desperation from Congo's private creditors fundamentally changed the way the Sassou Nguesso government marketed Congo's oil. It also enabled Gokana's ascension.

Jay Newman bought up these "worthless" pieces of paper for $0.07 on the dollar, ultimately assembling a portfolio worth $120 million. When European and American courts validated these debts and his right to seize state property, Newman became even more ambitious. In 2003 and 2005 he sued to seize oil shipments assigned to BNP Paribas under pre-financing arrangements; in 2005 he did so under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) act, which originally targeted the American Mafia and by law awarded triple damages [155]. Sassou Nguesso thus required some mechanism to sell oil while evading creditors. Again, Gokana provided the solution. By April 2001 his relationship with Itoua was so strained that he simply resigned from SNPC UK, leaving Nwobodo and Denis Christel alone in London. Gokana returned to Brazzaville shortly thereafter, and in December met with Rodolphe Adada and Jean Baptiste Tati-Loutard, then the Foreign Affairs and Oil Ministers, respectively, and two of Sassou Nguesso's most trusted advisors. "To avoid the vulture funds," another former aide to Gokana told me, Gokana proposed a sophisticated network of shell companies.[27] Developed by Gokana's Swiss lawyer to replace the pre-financing scheme [51], it needed to be as complicated as possible, since "the vulture funds had so much money at their disposal."[28]

[26] See the World Bank's indicators, 2012.
[27] Interview with Wilfried Kivouvou, 13 June 2013.
[28] Interview with Wilfried Kivouvou, 13 June 2013.

Sassou Nguesso agreed. While publicly dismissing the vulture funds as "thug gangsters" and "snakes in the ocean" – "If this is not robbery," he asked, "what is?" [12] – Sassou Nguesso instructed Gokana to organize a new marketing scheme. With the SNPC UK dismantled, from 2003 Congo's oil was sold by the SNPC's new marketing arm, *Congolaise de Trading* (Cotrade), usually to a series of shell companies registered in Bermuda and elsewhere: Elenga Investment, Hemisphere Ventures, Long Beach Investments, Sphynx Bermuda, Sphynx UK, Africa Oil and Gas Corporation (AOGC), Phenicia, Pan Africa, Orion Investments, Litchfield Development, and Lockwood Enterprises. These shell companies usually purchased from Cotrade at between 5% and 20% below market price, and then sold Congo's oil on the international market. Between January 2003 and October 2005 at least 31 oil cargoes were traded by Sphynx Bermuda alone, worth approximately $472 million. In 2005 a London court simply described these as "sham companies and transactions ...to avoid enforcement of existing liabilities [51]. Gokana was pivotal to all this. He was, his former aide told me, "the system's institutional memory."[29] He was its "mastermind" [51]

To compensate for this extra delegation, Sassou Nguesso required some oversight mechanism. He turned to the same sorts of competitions that served his interests so well in the security apparatus. In particular, Sassou Nguesso insisted that ownership of these shell companies be divided. While Gokana replaced Itoua atop the SNPC, Cotrade was given to Denis Christel; its legal counsel was Blaise Elenga. The three of them were also the principals of Elenga Investment, Hemisphere Ventures, Long Beach Investments, Sphynx Bermuda, Sphynx UK, Africa Oil and Gas Corporation, Phenicia, Litchfield Development, and Lockwood Enterprises. The other major shell companies were scattered among Sassou Nguesso loyalists, including Frenchman Jean-Yves Ollivier,[30] an Algerian-born commodities trader who facilitated Sassou Nguesso's arms purchases in 1997 [183]. The most important of the shell companies had bank accounts at Brazzaville's BGFI Bank, overseen

[29] Interview with Wilfried Kivouvou, 13 June 2013.

[30] *La Lettre du Continent*, 2 September 2004, as well as Global Witness [79].

by Jean Dominique Okemba [51, 78, 79]. This division, one Congolese academic told me, "is how he knows when people are lying."[31] This core group undertook all major decisions that touched the oil sector. "Sometimes the Minister of Oil," Gokana's former aide told me, "would learn of their decisions on television news."[32]

The scheme insulated Sassou Nguesso from creditors, while ensuring that the most sensitive appointees monitored each other. The scheme's opacity also enabled Sassou Nguesso to avoid oversight from the Bretton Woods Institutions. In the early 2000s Sassou Nguesso redoubled his efforts to secure debt relief under the World Bank's Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative. Despite $3 billion of oil revenue pouring into the treasury in 2006 alone, Congo suffered from the world's highest per capita debt level. Intended to free poor countries to fund antipoverty programs rather than service debt, the HIPC program is ostensibly limited to democratic governments with pro-poor economic policies. Unaware of his central role in devising Sassou Nguesso's network of shell companies – equally unaware that he forced aides "to change the numbers in the *tableau des finances* to meet targets two days before their meetings"[33] – the IMF viewed Gokana as erudite and responsive. It viewed Denis Christel much less so, for it believed his Cotrade was the locus of Congo's oil mismanagement.[34] When Gokana proposed eliminating Cotrade during the 2009 debt relief negotiations,[35] the IMF happily agreed. Sassou Nguesso signed on, and in late 2010 Cotrade was dismantled and Christel out of work. The IMF issued other demands. Accounting giant KPMG audited the SNPC's books on a quarterly basis between 2006 and 2010, its results posted on the SNPC's website. All this worked. The IMF could account for only 60% of oil revenues prior to 2006, but nearly 80% thereafter.[36]

[31] Interview with Patrice Yengo, 8 January 2011.
[32] Interview with Wilfried Kivouvou, 13 June 2013.
[33] Interview with Wilfried Kivouvou, 13 June 2013.
[34] Interview with Oscar Melhado, 5 December 2011.
[35] Interview with Wilfried Kivouvou, 13 June 2013.
[36] Interview with Oscar Melhado, 5 December 2011.

Persuaded the transparency gains had been institutionalized, the IMF forgave Congo's debt in January 2010.[37] But Congo's institutions are nothing if not weak. Christel was named the SNPC's number two in 2011, much to the IMF's chagrin. Gokana was named president of the SNPC board of directors. In his place was Jerôme Koko, formerly vice president of Agip and an Oyo native. The Finance Minister who oversaw debt forgiveness, Pacifique Issoïbeka, formerly vice government of the Central Bank and well regarded by the IMF, was replaced by Gilbert Ondongo, a longtime loyalist whose wife was arrested twice in 2011 – first in Johannesburg and then in Paris – with 100 million cash stuffed in suitcases [49, 62].[38] The Sassou Nguesso government also stopped releasing its revenue figures. But having already forgiven Congo's debt, the IMF has no leverage to demand accountability. Dispirited, the IMF left Congo in late 2012.

4.1.3 The Propaganda Apparatus

Sassou Nguesso attends to his public relations apparatus as attentively as security and oil. Sassou Nguesso's Communication Ministers since 2003 – first Alain Akouala Atipault and now Bienvenue Okiémy – have been shadowed by a daughter, Claudia Lemboumba Sassou Nguesso, once married to the son of Omar Bongo's longtime Finance Minister. Educated at the London campus of Webster University in St. Louis, Claudia's chief responsibility is burnishing her father's international standing. In this, Claudia herself competes with Maria Aïcha Maylin, the wife of Sassou Nguesso's Paris oncologist.[39] And each, of course, must contend with Jean Paul Pigasse, whose *Agence d'Information d'Afrique Centrale* publishes *Les Déêches de Brazzaville* and *Géopolitique Africaine*, and maintains offices in Paris, Rome, Brussels, Brazzaville, and Kinshasa.

The result of these competitions is a stunningly aggressive public relations campaign. In September 2006, as Sassou Nguesso's term as African Union president neared its conclusion, Claudia ap-

[37] Interview with Oscar Melhado, 5 December 2011
[38] *La Lettre du Continent*, 20 October 2011.
[39] *La Lettre du Continent*, 8 October 2009.

proached Herman Cohen, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs from 1988 until 1993 and then head of a Washington lobbying firm. Cohen was widely known for defending African autocrats with horrendous human rights records, "the influence peddler of choice for African despots in need of a public relations buff-up" [165]. He claimed the 1992 Angolan presidential elections were "free and fair," despite polling stations that reported *identical* vote totals [114]. The beneficiary of his judgment, José Eduardo Dos Santos, later hired Cohen's lobbying firm for some $600, 000 per year.[40] Also in 1992 he pronounced Mobutu Sese Seko "enthusiastic for democracy" and registered with the Justice Department as an agent of Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, from whom Cohen's firm received $3 million over five years [165]. Sassou Nguesso paid Cohen some $500, 000 to persuade the Eleanor Roosevelt Institute for Justice and Peace to award him some sort of peace prize.[41] The Roosevelt Center was apparently created solely to award this particular prize. It has no internet presence, no physical headquarters save for a $2.5 million DuPont Circle townhouse, and, according to the IRS, has been defunct since at least 2008.[42] Its executive director at the time, Nicholas Kittrie,[43] refuses to discuss the circumstances surrounding the award.[44]

Maylin, meanwhile, "boasts that she is the only one to have put Sassou Nguesso in contact with numerous international journalists."[45] In addition to persuading a reporter from *Le Figaro* to visit Oyo for an interview,[46] Maylin coordinated Sassou Nguesso's *Straight Speaking for Africa*,[47] a series of conversations with a French reporter about his accomplishments since returning to power. The book is, quite literally, self-congratulatory. A review on Jean Dominique Okemba's *www.Congo-Site.com* noted that Sassou Nguesso "congratulates himself for the level of development attained by

[40] *La Lettre du Continent*, 15 January 1998.
[41] *La Lettre du Continent*, 14 September 2006.
[42] See GuideStart Nonprofit Directory, at `www.guidestar.org`. Accessed 5 July 2014.
[43] See the website of American University, where Kittrie teaches criminal law and sits on the Academic Council of the Center for Global Peace: `http://www1.american.edu/cgp/body_academic.htm`.
[44] I contacted Kittrie on 26 December 2011 and 5 July 2014. He never responded to requests for comment.
[45] *La Lettre du Continent*, 8 October 2009.
[46] *La Lettre du Continent*, 4 February 2010.
[47] *La Lettre du Continent*, 19 November 2009.

the country thanks to his economic policies" [90]. Published in June 2009, the book's advertises a foreword by Nelson Mandela, whose praise for Sassou Nguesso is conspicuously fulsome:

> In President Denis Sassou Nguesso, I recognize a man who is not only one of our great African leaders ...but also one of those who gave their unconditional support to our fighters' demand for freedom, and who worked tirelessly to free oppressed peoples from their chains and help restore their dignity and hope [158].

Published in both English and French, the volume immediately preceded the 2009 presidential elections.

In October the Mandela Foundation declared that the aging president "neither read the book nor [wrote] a foreword for it." More, it "condemned" the foreword as "a brazen abuse of Mr. Mandela's name" by a "dictator" [61, 167]. The words were apparently taken from a 1996 speech in Cape Town, when Sassou Nguesso was still praised for relinquishing power – however forced – in 1992. Akouala Atipault, then Communications Minister and spokesman, seized the opportunity to defend Sassou Nguesso's honor with all the ferocity he could:

> Mandela's name doesn't belong to the foundation but to the African continent .... We don't need their authorization to publish what Mandela said after the Congolese gave their blood for the liberation of southern African countries [21].

Akouala went on to denounce "the cabal secretly led by human rights NGO activists ...behind this media campaign, who always aim to harm African presidents and ultimately to destabilize Africa."[48] Akouala's defense of Sassou Nguesso in the Beach Massacre was equally strident. After Radio France International aired an interview with Marie-Nicodème Nganga, a Sassou Nguesso counselor who claimed to witness the Massacre outside the Presidential Palace, Akouala said this:

[48] http://www.afriqueavenir.org/2009/10/23/une-ong-denonce-une-cabale-mediatique-contre-le-president-congolais-sassou-nguesso/.

> We will no longer accept RFI's impartial reporting on our country and on the *affaire des disparus*. RFI is the world champion in disinformation and subversion. ...If we don't reach an agreement tomorrow with RFI, we will stop [the broadcasts] [7].

In December 2003, Akouala simply dismissed the 353 victims of the Beach Massacres, referring to them as "*pseudo disparus*" – quasi disappeared – and suggested that they were living quietly in Kinshasa.[49] The defense cost Akouala all credibility, domestic and international. Indeed, *Talassa* once asked whether he was the "Minister of Information or Disinformation?"[50] But Sassou Nguesso consistently rewards Akouala's loyalty. In 2009 he was made Minister of Special Economic Zones, the centerpiece of Sassou Nguesso's economic diversification efforts and a portfolio that entails frequent travel to China and Singapore.

4.1.4 Size and Evolution of the Parallel Government

The quantitative evidence confirms the prevalence of these competitions. Using a range of data sources – a team of Congolese research assistants, archival research at Brazzaville's three leading newspapers, and nearly 300 key informant interviews – I reconstructed Sassou Nguesso's parallel government apparatus. For each of 34 key government portfolios, I identified the formal appointee – the minister or general who has primary responsibility for the portfolio – and any elites who supervise the formal appointee on Sassou Nguesso's behalf. The result is a portfolio-year dataset that records biographic and professional data for nearly 200 elites since 1997.

A sample of Sassou Nguesso's parallel government appears in Table ??. Figure 4.1 presents its size and evolution. The left graphic records the number of elites who shared responsibility for a given portfolio in a given year. Of the 510 portfolio-years in the dataset, in 34 did a portfolio go unfilled. In 177 and 180 portfolio-years, respectively, Sassou Nguesso appointed one or two elites to the same

[49] *La Semaine Africaine*, 4 December 2003.
[50] *Talassa*, 28 August 2009.

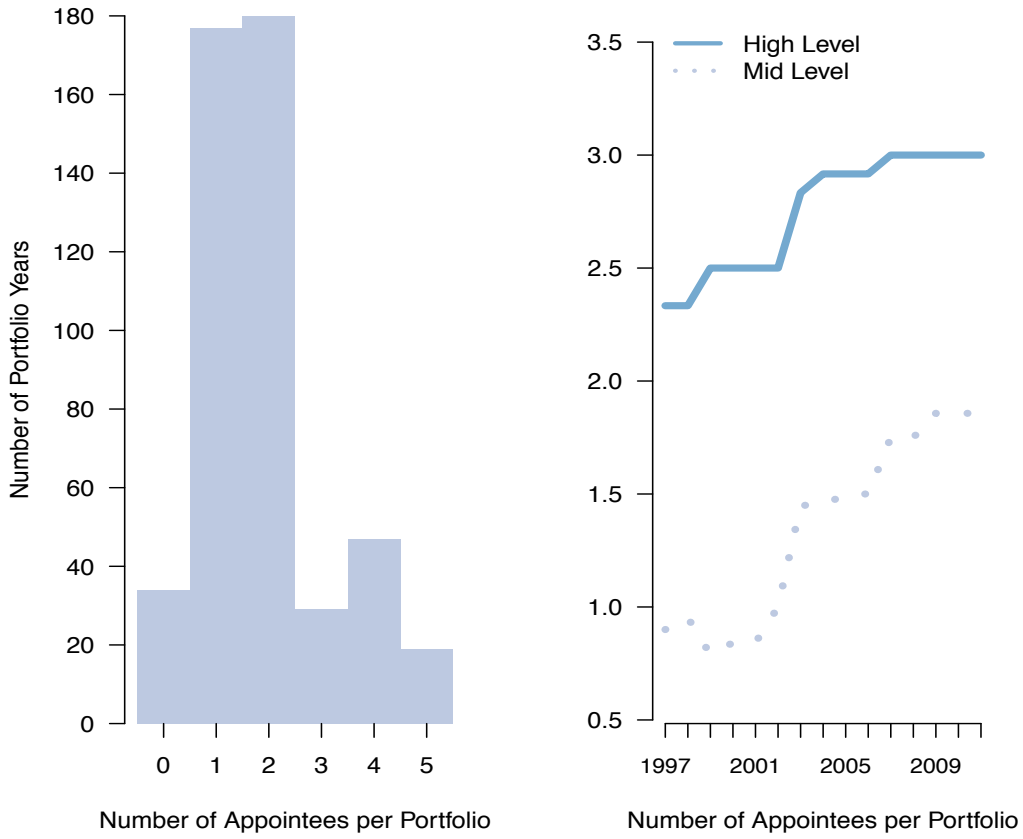

Figure 4.1: The size and evolution of Sassou Nguesso's parallel government. The left graph records the number of appointees, per portfolio, to each of the 34 portfolios in the dataset. In only 34 portfolio years did Sassou Nguesso not duplicate, while in 19 dataset years a single portfolio had as many as six elites responsible for it. The right graph records the mean number of appointees by portfolio sensitivity and year.

portfolio. Together, these 357 portfolio-years constitute 73% of the dataset. Finally, Sassou Nguesso appointed between three and five elites to a single portfolio in 95 portfolio-years, or just less than 20% of the dataset.

The right graphic in Figure 4.1 records the evolution of Sassou Nguesso's parallel government apparatus over time. Upon seizing power in 1997, Sassou Nguesso appointed one elite to each mid

level portfolio. To each of his regime's high level portfolios he appointed between two and three elites. It was, one Paris based newsletter observed, a particularly "imposing presidential cabinet."[51] In 2003 Sassou Nguesso drastically expanded it. Working alongside Sassou Nguesso is now a much broader set of presidential counselors, who oversee virtually every ministerial portfolio. The counselors review ministerial decisions, launch policy initiatives, and report to Sassou Nguesso directly. Since then, he has assigned between one and two elites to each mid level portfolio, and roughly three elites to each high level portfolio.

Modern autocrats lack access to the sort of unrestrained violence that yields compliance through fear. Therefore, they create parallel governments. With multiple elites discharging roughly the same responsibilities, modern autocrats force elites to compete for the autocrat's goodwill, rendering him stronger still. Yet the narratives above risk simplifying Sassou Nguesso's achievement. "We used to think that dictators ...were so powerful," Gellately [75] writes, "that they manipulated people almost at will." They do not. They may create multiple reporting lines, but, when differences emerge, they seldom know who is telling the truth [52, 128, 74, 75, 164]. And these multiple reporting lines may not even yield differences. For ostensibly competing elites may cooperate in pursuit of their own personal interests, counter to those of the autocrat. In short, the narratives above tell us only that Sassou Nguesso employs these parallel governments widely and successfully. The narratives tell us little about how, as well as the conditions required for their success.

4.2 A Theory of Parallel Governments

For this, I employ game theory. I study a simple interaction between an autocrat D and elite i, who occupies portfolio j in the autocrat's governing coalition. By virtue of his appointment to the governing coalition – as discussed in Chapter 3 – elite i shares some amount b^{D*} of state revenue. Al-

[51] *La Lettre du Continent* 30 October 1997.

though elite i does not engage in *coups d'état*, he must still decide how thoroughly to commit himself to his regime responsibilities.

Elite performance is crucial to the autocrat's success. It conditions regime security, revenue, public relations, and virtually everything else. Yet the autocrat may have difficulty ensuring his elites discharge their government responsibilities effectively. First, since ministerial and military portfolios enable elites to siphon state resources, their income does not depend directly on their performance. As a result, the autocrat cannot simply tie elite income to effort. Second, the autocrat is also unable to monitor elite behavior directly. For the autocrat's government is large and its bureaucratic institutions are weak.

I study a pair of game theoretic models. The first examines elite effort allocation under conventional monitoring institutions. Offered for comparison with parallel government monitoring, the model is based loosely on Lskavyan [113]'s account of Stalin's USSR. In this model, the autocrat's ability to induce elite effort is limited by the quality of his monitoring institutions. The second model lets the autocrat build a parallel government apparatus, in which $n \geq 2$ elites perform roughly the same task; elites who perform "less well" than their counterparts are then punished. Inspired by economic models of tournaments [103], the model admits the possibility of elite collusion and gives autocrats a variety of instruments to prevent it.

4.2.1 Environment: Inducing Compliance with Fear

As a baseline, I first consider elite behavior when the autocrat has recourse to fear. Elite i gains b^{D*} from coalition membership, but is also subject to punishment $d \in [0, \delta]$ if the autocrat detects him giving less than full effort $\bar{e}$ to his governing responsibilities. The parameter δ represents the maximal punishment to which an autocrat can subject his elite without losing power. The model is agnostic about the determinants of δ, or how the autocrat loses power if he violates it. Indiscriminate mass violence may attract the attention of the international community, which imposes sanctions or

welcomes defectors. Alternatively, δ may represent the point beyond which the elite prefers a rival. Elite i's utility from the governing coalition is then

$$u_i(d, e) = w^* - \varrho(\bar{e} - e_i)\, d - c(e_i) \tag{4.1}$$

The parameter $\varrho \in [0, 1]$ measures the quality of the autocrat's monitoring institutions. As $\varrho \to 1$, the autocrat's monitoring institutions are strong, capable of detecting any deviation from full effort allocation; by contrast, as $\varrho \to 0$, the monitoring institutions at the autocrat's disposal are weak. The term $c(e_i)$ measures the cost to elite i of allocating effort e_i to governing responsibilities. For loyal diligence is costly, and if elite i can receive the perquisites of power without investing effort in the regime's survival, so much the better. For simplicity, I let $c(e_i) = \frac{1}{2}e_i^2$.

Since the regime's survival depends, in part, on elite effort, the autocrat has an interest in ensuring his elites accomplish the tasks assigned. For simplicity, I model the autocrat's utility from portfolio j as

$$u_D(e_i) = \beta_j e_i - b^{D*} \tag{4.2}$$

The parameter $\beta_j \in (0, 2]$ measures the contribution of portfolio j to the autocrat's hold on power; as $\beta_j \to 2$, portfolio j is crucial to regime security. The autocrat's utility from portfolio j is thus the difference between his gains from elite effort and the wage b^{D*} he is required to pay. In this simple set-up, punishment is costless to the autocrat.

4.2.2 Environment: Inducing Compliance with Competition

Alternatively, the autocrat may create a parallel government for portfolio j, in which elites $i \in \{1, \ldots, n_j\}$ perform roughly identical tasks. In particular, the autocrat reserves punishment $d \in$

$[0, \delta]$ for all elites who invest less than the maximal effort level exerted by their colleagues. This creates a competition between the n_j elites assigned to portfolio j to avoid the autocrat's punishment. Elite i's expected utility from the competition is

$$E\left[u_i\left(e_i, \alpha\right)\right] \quad = \quad b^{D*} - \Pr\left(e_i < \max\{e_{-i}\} + \alpha\right) \times d - c\left(e_i\right) \tag{4.3}$$

As above, b^{D*} gives elite i's returns from membership in the coalition and $c\left(e_i\right)$ gives the cost of effort. The random variable $\alpha \gtreqless 0$ captures the difficulty in comparing elite performance. The probability that elite i loses the competition is thus a function of i's effort, the effort level of i's competitors, and the random noise α caused by the autocrat's imperfect monitoring. I assume the random variable α is distributed

$$\alpha \sim \text{Unif}\left[-\frac{1}{n_j\psi}, \frac{1}{n_j\psi}\right] \tag{4.4}$$

The parameter $\psi > 0$ reflects the autocrat's ability to discern elite effort levels; as ψ gets large, the autocrat discerns elite effort with certainty.

Before the n_j elites set their effort levels, they may propose a collusive agreement in which $e_1 = \cdots = e_{n_j} = \underline{e}$, enabling them each to set lower effort levels lower than they would otherwise. Since elite effort level is identical, they also avoid the punishment d. For this collusive agreement to reach fruition, however, elite i must first propose it to each of his counterparts. This creates the possibility of denunciation: elite $-i$ may have an incentive to denounce elite i's proposal to the autocrat. This, in turn, creates the possibility of counter-denunciation, among the great problems of autocratic politics. Elite i denounces his denouncer, leaving the autocrat potentially worse off than without the parallel government apparatus.

I let the autocrat settle the series of denunciations and counter-denunciations by consulting with

the other elites assigned to the same portfolio. In particular, as n_j gets large, the autocrat is more likely to be able to settle the denunciation and counter-denunciation dispute by consulting the other elites assigned to the same portfolio. This assumption is akin to a "law of large numbers": the more elites the autocrat can ask, the more likely he is to locate the truth. If elite i proposes a collusive agreement, it is detected with probability

$$\Pr\left(\text{Detection}\right) \quad = \quad 1 - \frac{1}{n_j t_j}$$

The variable $t_j > 1$ measures distrust among paired elites. It reflects the possibility that, when interrogated by the autocrat or his security services, colluding elites will betray each other's confidence. The autocrat's utility from portfolio j is now a function of the maximum elite effort level, the opportunity cost of duplicating, and the probability that elites successfully collude:

$$E\left[u_D\left(e_i\right)\right] \quad = \quad \Pr\left(\text{Collusion}\right)\beta_j \underline{e} + \left[1 - \Pr\left(\text{Collusion}\right)\right]\beta_j \max\{e_i\} - n_j b^{D*} \qquad (4.5)$$

The timing of the game is visualized in Figure 4.2.

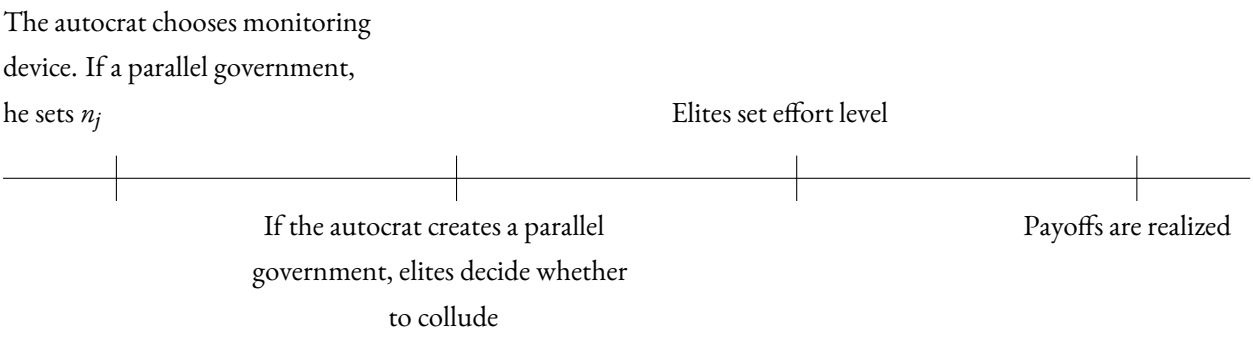

Figure 4.2: Timing of the game.

4.2.3 Results

Lemmas 1 and 2 establish the behaviors of autocrat and elite under the two monitoring devices.

Lemma 1 ("Fear"). *When the autocrat employs fear, he sets the maximal punishment* $d^{*F} = \delta$. *Elite* i*'s optimal effort is*

$$e_i^{F*} = \varrho\delta$$

The outcome of the monitoring game under fear is straightforward. Since punishment is costless for the autocrat, he sets it maximally. Elites respond by increasing their effort allocation, but only in relation to the quality of the autocrat's monitoring device.

Lemma 2 ("Parallel Government"). *When the autocrat creates a parallel government, he sets punishment at*

$$d^{PG*} = \begin{cases} \frac{2}{2}\left(1 - \frac{1}{n_j^* t_j^*}\right) & \text{if } \frac{2}{2}\left(1 - \frac{1}{n_j^* t_j^*}\right) < \delta \\ \delta & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

Elites $i \in \{1, \ldots, n_j\}$ *allocate effort*

$$e_i^{PG*} = \psi d^{PG*}$$

and, in expectation, no one is punished. The autocrat creates a parallel government of size

$$n_j^* = \left(\frac{2\beta_j}{b^{D*}\psi t_j^*}\right)^{\frac{1}{2}} \tag{4.6}$$

and sets t_j^* *as high as possible.*

As in Lemma 1, Lemma 2 makes clear that elites allocate to their regime responsibilities only what the autocrat can force: a combination of his ability to ascertain elite effort, here given by ψ, and his

ability to punish. But the autocrat's ability to ascertain elite effort under the parallel government, given by ψ, is potentially much higher. By pitting elites against each other, Sassou Nguesso creates a standard by which to judge elite effort. This, in turn, forces elites to work harder for his approval. But all this comes at a cost. Since parallel governments require multiple elites, autocrats are forced to pay double or triple to accomplish a task otherwise undertaken by a single appointee.

Parallel governments also limit the autocrat's ability to employ fear. The autocrat's worst case outcome is elite collusion: bearing the wage bill of a parallel government without obtaining the benefits of elite effort. To avoid this, the autocrat is forced to satisfy a "no collusion constraint," which caps the punishment he can impose for elite shirking. In particular, if punishment d^{PG*} is so great that – combined with the increased effort the parallel government induces – elites would prefer to run the risk of detection to avoid the burden of regime participation, elites will always collude and the parallel government will prove useless.

If the autocrat creates a parallel government for portfolio j, Lemma 2 also teaches us about its size. Most importantly, autocrats create larger parallel governments for their most critical regime portfolios. Since appointees to the security and oil apparatus contribute more to regime survival – indeed, Brazzaville is worth little to Sassou Nguesso without Pointe-Noire's oil reserves – autocrats are willing to incur larger wage bills to prevent malfeasance. Conversely, autocrats with larger wage bills find parallel governments less attractive. Recall from Chapter 3 that a critical determinant of b^{D*} is the autocrat's standing within society: his personal hold on power ϑ, his ability to render popular revolutions virtually impossible ϱ, and the state revenue – given by R and γ – at his disposal. These factors decrease the financial allocation b^{D*} required to secure elite loyalty and, in turn, they enable autocrats to create larger parallel governments. Stronger autocrats employ techniques that render them stronger still.

Finally, autocrats have an especially strong incentive to encourage competition among elites prone to distrust anyway. For *ex ante* distrust renders collusion less likely, which enables autocrats

to reduce the total number of appointees per portfolio n_j^*. This provides another explanation for why Sassou Nguesso assigns so many duplicates to the oil and security portfolios. Since their occupants hail overwhelmingly from Oyo's environs, their *ex ante* level of trust is likely higher. To compensate for this – to increase the probability of detection in case of malfeasance – Sassou Nguesso likely expands his parallel government in the oil sector.

Proposition 2 uses these results to explain when autocrats create parallel governments.

Proposition 2 ("Parallel Governments or Fear?"). *The autocrat creates a parallel government for portfolio j when*

$$\psi d^{PG*} - \varrho\delta \quad > \quad \left(\frac{2b^{D*}}{\beta_j \psi t_j}\right)^{\frac{1}{2}} \tag{4.7}$$

The left-hand side of equation (4.7) measures the autocrat's net gain from a parallel government. Recall from above that $d^{PG*} \leq \delta$. Hence the left-hand side is large and positive only as ψ increases and $\varrho \to 0$: as the parallel government facilitates elite effort judgment relative to traditional monitoring institutions. The right-side measures the relative cost of the parallel government per portfolio, determined crucially by the wage bill b^{D*} and *ex ante* distrust among matched elites t_j^*.

As Lemma 2 implied, parallel governments are accessible only to the most secure autocrats: those who can secure elite loyalty b^{D*} at least cost. Only these autocrats can afford the higher wage bill that parallel governments entail. But Proposition 2 is most notable for the attention it calls to an autocrat's recourse to punishment, measured by δ. As the constraints upon autocrats increase, fear is a less effective motivator. International human rights norms prevent autocrats from simply threatening their elites into submission. In the context of the model, $\delta \to d^{PG*}$. As this occurs, the advantage of fear quickly disappears, and the parallel government becomes far more attractive.

4.3 Cleavage and Size in the Parallel Government

Lemma 2 and Proposition 2 teach us that parallel governments induce elite compliance through competition. A substitute for fear, these parallel governments are particularly attractive to modern autocrats, who are constrained by the norms of Western creditors. For these parallel governments to prove effective, however, autocrats must prevent matched elites from colluding. The theory thus calls our attention to the sources of distrust among Congolese elites, as well as the number of elites that Sassou Nguesso appoints to each portfolio.

In short, the theory compels us to return to Congo.

4.3.1 Cleavages and the Construction of the Parallel Government

To probe how Sassou Nguesso matches elites, I identify two sources of distrust, both inspired by the narratives in Section 4.1 and my years in Congo.

First, Sassou Nguesso's relatives are widely regarded as unfailingly loyal. The most favored are among the global super rich; the less favored live in opulence around the world. None has ever been implicated in a nascent *coup d'état*. In short, it would be unthinkable for a regular appointee to approach a Sassou Nguesso family member with a plan to siphon oil, weapons, or some other state resource; the regular appointee would assume that the family member would report his malfeasance. If Sassou Nguesso's family members are unfailingly loyal to him, they are also unfailingly loyal to their immediate clan within the family. For the family is so large that there are numerous such clans: the maternal side, based in Ollombo, and the personal side, based in Oyo; the children who are loyal foremost to their mothers and full siblings. These clans jockey against each other for the most prized positions in the regime: the most lucrative positions in the oil and military sector, as well as for the opportunity to succeed Sassou Nguesso himself. Accordingly, I constructed variable $\texttt{Opposing Families}_{jt}$, which assumes value 1 if a single portfolio contains elites from opposing

sides of Sassou Nguesso's family, or an elite from Sassou Nguesso's family and an elite from outside. Hence the presidential security portfolio is coded as a 1 for each year that Jean Dominique Okemba and Hilaire Moko were pitted against each other; the oil portfolio is coded as a 1 for each year the SNPC director worked alongside son Denis Christel.

Second, although Sassou Nguesso recruits overwhelmingly from a 100 mile radius around Oyo, he occasionally entrusts sensitive portfolios to elites from beyond. This creates a second potential cleavage that Sassou Nguesso can exploit: competing loyalties during the civil war. Given their historical animosity, northern and southern residents are particularly unlikely to trust each other. Hence I create a second variable, $\texttt{Opposing Regions}_{jt}$, which assumes value 1 if a paired elites are divided by northern and southern birth. I refer to these two potential cleavages as anti-collusion devices, and I construct a third variable, $\texttt{Anti Collusion Device}_{jt}$, which assumes value 2 if $\texttt{Opposing Families}_{jt} = 1$ and $\texttt{Opposing Regions}_{jt} = 1$, value 0 if $\texttt{Opposing Families}_{jt} = 0$ and $\texttt{Opposing Regions}_{jt} = 0$, and 1 otherwise. This trichotomous variable not only measures the presence of a cleavage, but also its extent.

These cleavages, Figure 4.3 makes clear, are valuable. Sassou Nguesso has less than 10 recognized children; he has a handful of trusted, politically active nieces, nephews, and cousins. Consequently, in only 25% of portfolio-years did Sassou Nguesso pair elites who are separated by family status. Although the civil war cleavage is more accessible, it is limited by Sassou Nguesso's commitment to the geographic in-group. Hence in only 35% of portfolio-years did Sassou Nguesso pair elites who are separated by civil war loyalties. Reflecting the scarcity of these cleavages, in 65% of portfolio-years Sassou Nguesso matched elites who were separated by neither of the cleavages discussed above.

Because these cleavages are valuable, the theory in Section 4.2 tells us, Sassou Nguesso should allocate them carefully: to the portfolios most critical for regime survival. Accordingly, I estimate the probability that appointees to portfolio j are separated by a cleavage in a given year t as a function of whether the portfolio is high level: security, oil, justice, and a variety of other portfolios identified in

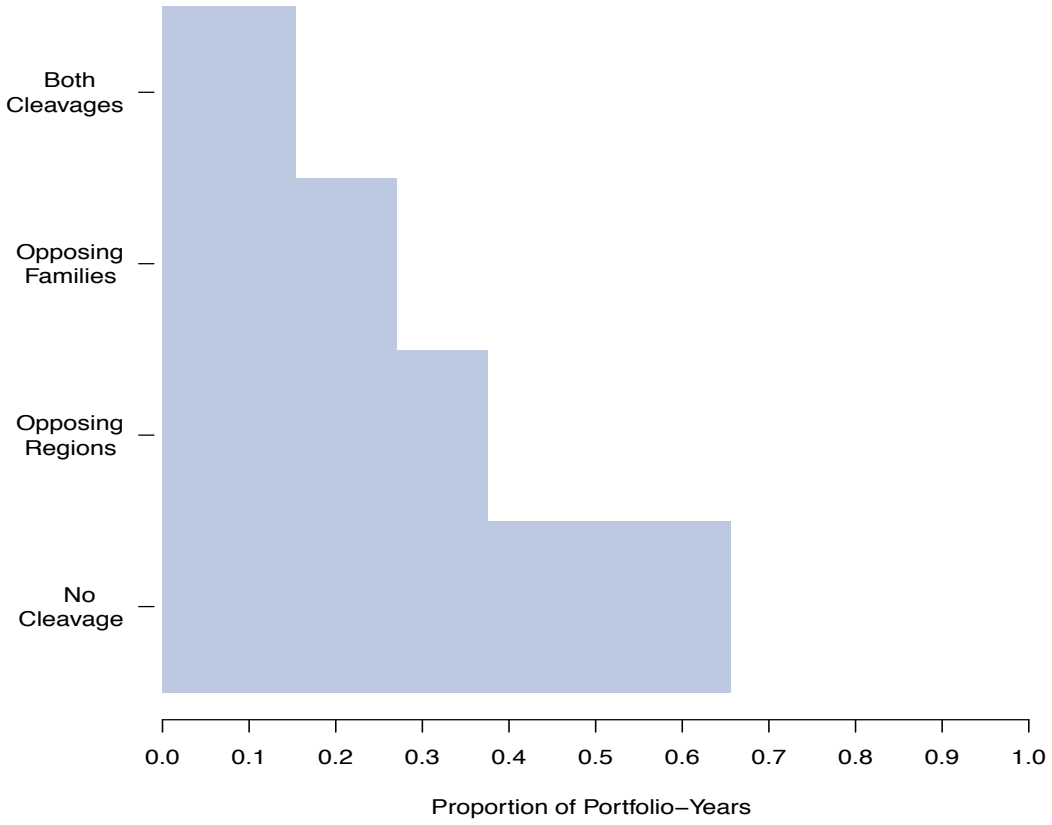

Figure 4.3: The the prevalence of cleavages in Sassou Nguesso's parallel government.

Chapter 3. I control for a variety of other portfolio level characteristics: the number of elites assigned to portfolio *j* in year *t*, whether the formal appointee is a member of the PCT or a veteran of the civil war effort, and the distance of the formal appointee's birth village to Oyo. I also include year fixed effects to accommodate any unobserved features.

The statistical results appear in Table 4.2 and are visualized in Figure 4.4. They are strikingly consistent with the theory in Section 4.2. The left column of Figure 4.4 reports the predicted probability that elites appointed to portfolio *j* are separated by family status. Sassou Nguesso's family members are valuable, as well as the cleavages that separate them. Few, then, are allocated to the

regime's low and mid level portfolios, and so the elites who occupy these portfolios are unlikely to be shadowed by them. If, however, elite *i* is shifted to a high level position, the probability he is shadowed by a Sassou Nguesso family member – or if a Sassou Nguesso family member, someone from a competing clan – rises from roughly 0.08 to 0.32.

The center column of Figure 4.4 reports the predicted probability that elites appointed to portfolio *j* are separated by civil war loyalties. It suggests that Sassou Nguesso manages his low and mid level portfolios fundamentally differently than he manages his high level portfolios. Elites appointed to high level portfolios are separated by a regional cleavage with probability 0.38. Given Sassou Nguesso's preference for his geographic in-group, this probability is relatively high. But if elite *i* is shifted to a low or mid level portfolio, the probability he is shadowed by an appointee from an historically antagonistic region rises to nearly 0.50. These results suggest that Sassou Nguesso recruits from outside the geographic in-group, at least in part, to compel in-group appointees to commit full effort to their regime responsibilities.

The right column of Figure 4.4 reports the predicted probability that elites appointed to portfolio *j* are separated by *both* potential cleavages. Again, since Sassou Nguesso reserves his family members for the regime's most sensitive positions, low and mid level portfolios are exceedingly unlikely to be populated by elites separated by both cleavages. But there is some evidence that Sassou Nguesso employs regional cleavages alongside family cleavages. Indeed, the predicted probability of both cleavages rises to roughly 20% for high level portfolios.

Of course, formal appointees to high level portfolios may be systematically different than their low level counterparts. They are, after all, selected by Sassou Nguesso himself. They are more likely drawn from his family, the geographic in-group, civil war veterans, and members of his freemasonry lodge. If these differences render them more likely to be subject to anti-collusion devices, the results from Models 1 through 3 could be misleading. As a robustness check, I employ a matching estimator that restricts attention to high and low/mid level portfolios in which the formal appointees are

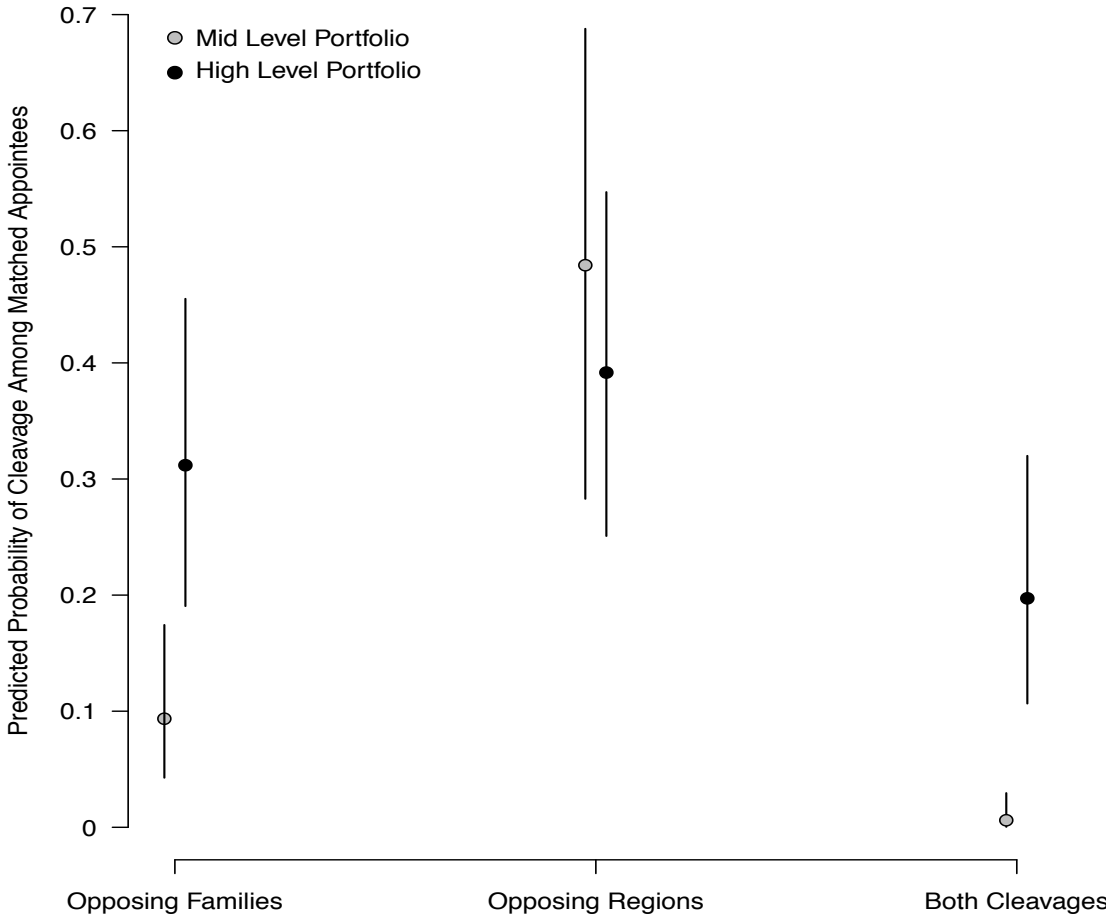

Figure 4.4: The effect of portfolio sensitivity on the predicted probability of cleavage. The results corresponds to Models 1 through 3 in Table 4.2.

similar in all respects. As Table 6.2 makes clear, the pruned dataset also restricts attention to high and mid level portfolios that also feature roughly the same number of elites appointed to them. The results appear in the last three columns of Table 4.2, and they are virtually identical to those in the first three columns.

In short, Sassou Nguesso has relatively few anti-collusion devices to allocate. There are only so many cleavages within his family he can exploit, only so many relatives he can pit against non-

Table 4.1: Balance Improvement for Matched Data

	Means Treated All Data	Means Control All Data	Means Treated Matched Data	Means Control Matched Data
Distance	0.732	0.214	0.732	0.607
Number of Duplicates	2.722	1.573	2.722	1.886
Formal: Family	0.188	0.150	0.188	0.188
Formal: GLC	0.801	0.541	0.801	0.835
Formal: Civil War Post	0.750	0.205	0.750	0.688
Formal: PCT or Allied Party	0.898	0.591	0.898	0.955
Formal: Oyo Distance	84.236	182.326	84.236	84.618

relatives, and only so many southerners he is willing to appoint to the regime's mid and high level portfolios. As a result, Sassou Nguesso allocates them strategically. Sassou Nguesso scatters his family members among the most critical portfolios; they shadow, indeed are shadowed by, family members from different clans or other members of the geographic in-group. Mid level portfolios are more commonly separated by regional cleavages.

4.3.2 Size of the Parallel Government

Figure 4.1 makes clear that Sassou Nguesso's parallel government exhibits tremendous variation in size. While Sassou Nguesso employed a parallel government in the vast majority of portfolio-years, his parallel government counted three or more elites in nearly 20% of portfolio-years. The theory in Section 4.2 suggests that he does so to create a "law of large numbers" effect, which enables him to prevent cycles of denunciation and counter-denunciation.

To probe the effect of portfolio sensitivity on parallel government size, I employ a negative binomial model. Again, I control for a variety of portfolio and annual characteristics that might condition how many elites Sassou Nguesso appoints to each portfolio: whether the formal appointee in year t was a member of Sassou Nguesso's family, initiated into the GLC freemasonry lodge, served prominently in his civil war effort, or is a member of the PCT or an allied party. I also control for

Table 4.2: Statistical Results

	Opposing Families Logit	Opposing Regions Logit	Both Cleavages Logit	Opposing Families Matching	Opposing Regions Matching	Both Cleavages Matching
High Level Portfolio	1.512**	-0.034	4.199**	2.484**	0.384	3.522**
	(0.547)	(0.703)	(1.277)	(0.507)	(0.356)	(1.026)
Number of Duplicates	1.434**	1.870**	1.302**			
	(0.257)	(0.269)	(0.213)			
Formal Appointee: Family	5.201**	0.402	1.458*			
	(0.555)	(0.586)	(0.622)			
Formal Appointee: Civil War Post	2.087**	0.170	1.312*			
	(0.555)	(0.604)	(0.597)			
Formal Appointee: Oyo Distance	-0.008**	0.004†	0.001			
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)			
Formal Appointee: PCT	-0.872	-0.947†	-1.910*			
	(0.813)	(0.566)	(0.840)			
Formal Appointee: GLC	0.610	-0.491	-0.762			
	(0.570)	(0.603)	(0.674)			
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	396	241	396	185	185	185

Significance levels: † : 10% * : 5% ** : 1%

the distance of the formal appointee's birth village to Oyo and unobserved annual characteristics.

I include a second explanatory variable of interest. Working with a team of IMF country experts, I computed the value of Congo's oil revenue by year: the country's total production multiplied by the global market price. Although the measure does not reflect the total amount of revenue to which Sassou Nguesso has access – that sum is roughly 30% of the total value – it does provide a relative indicator of annual wealth. Indeed, the theory in Section 4.2 suggests that the size of Sassou Nguesso's parallel government should rise with his access to state revenue.

The results appear in Table 4.3 and are visualized in Figure 4.5. Again, they are strikingly consistent with the theory in Section 4.2. The left column of Figure 4.5 reports the predicted number of appointees allocated to portfolio *j* as a function of portfolio sensitivity. It suggests that if elite *i* is shifted from a mid level to a high level portfolio, he should expect to have one additional elite shadowing him. This effect holds even controlling for the myriad other ways elite *i* could be perceived as more loyal to Sassou Nguesso: participation in the civil war effort, membership in the GLC freemasonry lodge, and even family links with Sassou Nguesso himself. Likewise, as the volume of missing oil revenue increased from its minimum to its maximum value, Sassou Nguesso added just less than one duplicate to each government portfolio.

4.4 Conclusion

Lacking the institutional monitoring devices afforded by an effective bureaucracy and the recourse to fear enjoyed by autocrats who can employ violence freely, Sassou Nguesso chose to foster competition among appointees to secure their compliance. Doing so multiplied the regime's wage bill. But since multiple elites discharged essentially the same task, Sassou Nguesso created a standard by which their efforts could be evaluated. The technique, Section 4.2 makes clear, created the possibility of cycles of denunciation and counter denunciation, as well as collusion among appointees.

Table 4.3: Statistical Results

	Parallel Government Size Negative Binomial
High Level Portfolio	0.514**
	(0.099)
Oil Value	0.208**
	(0.076)
Formal Appointee: Family	0.214*
	(0.102)
Formal Appointee: Civil War Post	-0.144
	(0.093)
Formal Appointee: Oyo Distance	-0.001**
	(0.001)
Formal Appointee: PCT	-0.006
	(0.108)
Formal Appointee: GLC	-0.087
	(0.097)
Year Fixed Effects	Yes
N	366

Significance levels: † : 10% * : 5% ** : 1%

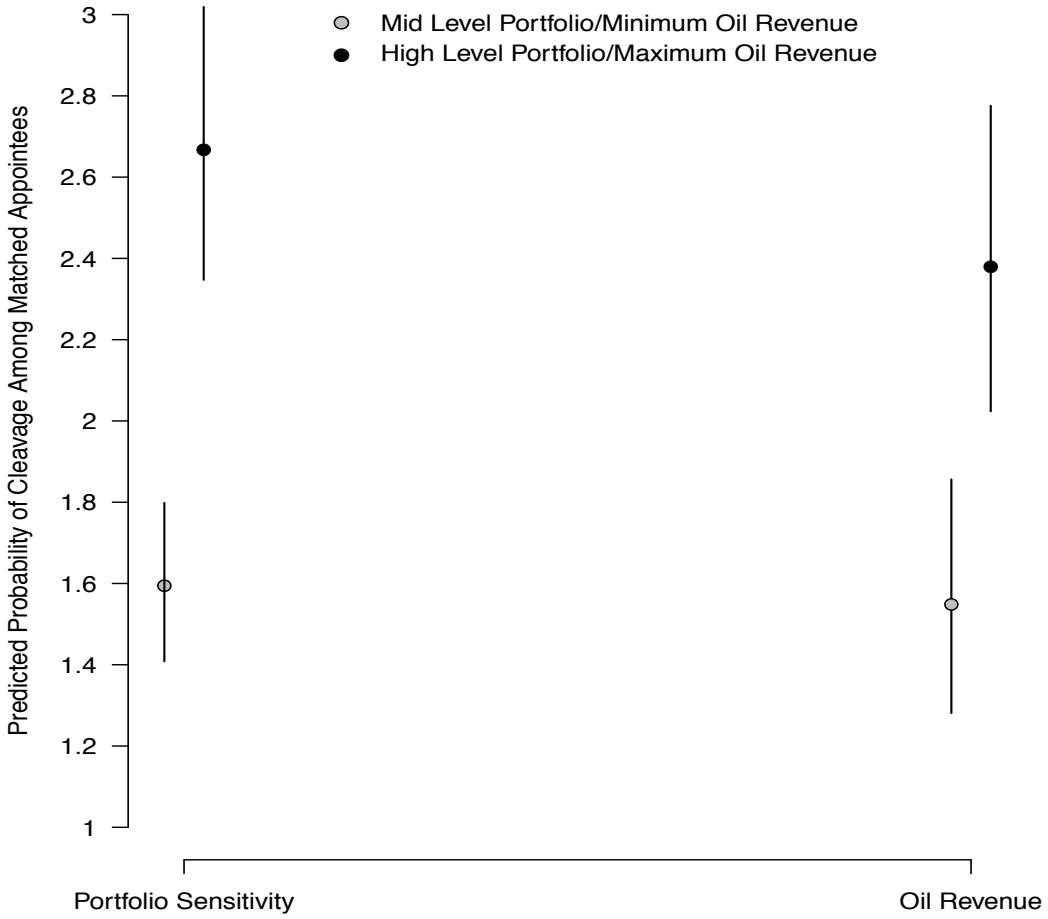

Figure 4.5: The effect of portfolio sensitivity and oil revenue on the predicted number of elites appointed to portfolio *j*. The results correspond Table 4.3.

Anticipating this, Sassou Nguesso responded. First, he increased the number of appointees assigned to the regime's most critical portfolios, creating a "law of large numbers" effect that enables him to divine truth from noise. Second, he paired elites according to family rivalries and civil war loyalties, preventing the trust required for collusion. Sassou Nguesso employed his financial resources to manipulate the *beliefs* of his elites. Malfeasance, they reasoned, would be detected and reported, and they would lose the perquisites of power.

Elite monitoring is so critical to autocratic survival that Sassou Nguesso employed a second technique, the subject of Chapter 5.

5

The Sorcery Masonic Lodge and Social Institutions, 2002-2005

Gobryas, if you show that your thinking corresponds to what you have said to us, I both accept you as a suppliant and promise, with the gods, to avenge the murder of your son. Tell me, if we do this for you, and allow you to have the fortifications, land, weapons, and power that you had before, what service will you do for us in return?

> Gobryas said: My fortifications I will provide you as a house whenever you come; the tribute from the land which I used to pay him I will bring to you; and wherever you go on campaign, I will go along with the power that comes from my land. There is also my daughter, whom I cherish, a maiden already ripe for marriage, whom previously I thought I was rearing as a wife for the present king. Now my daughter has herself, lamenting often, begged me not to give her to her brother's murderer, and I am similarly resolved. I now grant you to deliberate also about her in whatever way I show that I deliberate about you.
>
> Cyrus spoke: I give you my right hand, and take yours, on the condition that these things are true. Let the gods be our witnesses.
>
> – Xenophon, *The Education of Cyrus*

Having arranged his personal protection and share of oil revenue, by 2002 Sassou Nguesso appeared more secure than ever. The political opposition was virtually decimated: Sassou Nguesso won the constitutional referendum with nearly 95% of the vote, his political allies comprised the entire 60 seat Senate and well over 80% of the National Assembly, and the exiled opposition increasingly eschewed opprobrium in favor of reconciliation and the hope of eventual political alliance. Ostensibly independent newspapers were much more inclined to self-censor. While *La Semaine Africaine* heralded Sassou Nguesso's August 2002 ministerial shuffle as a "government of technocrats to fight corruption,"[1] *Talassa* wrote what most *Brazzavillois* believed but said only privately:

[1] *La Semaine Africaine*, 22 August 2002.

> The social life [of the country] proceeds at two speeds. On one side is the vast majority, everyday confronted with misery, and on the other is a minority that ostentatiously displays its riches, accumulated suddenly and without base. They roll in the most expensive model cars, buy real estate like peanuts: it's the most revolting form of opulence.[2]

Increasingly, Sassou Nguesso's most capable opponents were his supposed allies: the PCT's elders. Indeed, the PCT possessed its own internal hierarchy, which included a secretary general, political bureau, and Brazzaville section with its own elected officers. Although Sassou Nguesso was firmly ensconced as PCT president, party elders cultivated their own constituencies. These elders, much to their frustration, were no longer Sassou Nguesso's preferred ministers. Party elders also had their own loyalists for whom they sought seats in the National Assembly. In 2002 one PCT elder insisted on running against Maurice Nguesso, and won overwhelmingly. Having endured the trauma of the National Conference and remained loyal to Sassou Nguesso during the 1990s, these party elders were loathe to relinquish the personal constituencies they had acquired.

Against an immovable party apparatus with institutional rules that favored his rivals, Sassou Nguesso opted to simply "liquidate" the party. The project was referred to as *refondation*, and Sassou Nguesso's allies took to Brazzaville newspapers to drum up public support. The PCT's "socialist ideology," they argued, was outdated, even though its replacement – beyond unconditional loyalty to Sassou Nguesso – remained unclear to Congo's frustrated citizens. Privately, Sassou Nguesso's loyalists acknowledged that southerners regarded the PCT as a symbol of oppression, and hoped that a new party might make Sassou Nguesso marginally more palatable. As a result, loyalists argued that Sassou Nguesso was simply above the PCT. Wrote Claude Ernest Ndalla, a special counselor to the president and among Sassou Nguesso's longtime aides:

[2] *Talassa*, 16 August 2002.

> When we speak of the benefactors and the guides of humanity, we cite three names: Socrates, Buddha, and Jesus Christ. So let us be serious. Let us not enclose President Denis Sassou Nguesso in the PCT, in a single department, a single district, a single territory, a single clique![3]

Just in case *refondation* failed, Sassou Nguesso initiated a second strategy. His closest aides would found new parties and then combine them in a *Rassemblement de la majorité presidentielle* (RMP) – the Rally for the Presidential Majority – the ideology of which was unconditional loyalty to Sassou Nguesso. The new organization took the elephant as its symbol, and its logo soon appeared on Congolese passports. The RMP ultimately claimed some 60 member parties, rendering the PCT essentially irrelevant, merely one of 60 parties that supported him.

In short, Sassou Nguesso intended to move against the PCT elders, his supposed allies. In so doing, he confronted a challenge common to all autocrats. He could not anticipate their response: whether they would accept demotion or attempt to depose him. For autocratic regimes, O'Donnell and Schmitter [139] observe, include a combination of "hard-" and "soft-liners": an inner circle of regime loyalists, usually the autocrat's family and closest aides, and a set of circumstantial allies necessary to fill the government's many other portfolios. This cleavage, O'Donnell and Schmitter [139] teach us, is a central determinant of regime longevity:

> There is no transition whose beginning is not the consequence – direct or indirect – of important divisions within the authoritarian regime itself, principally along the fluctuating cleavage between hard-liners and soft-liners.

An autocrat's survival depends on these circumstantial allies. Since they enjoy privileged access to state arms and revenue, their *coups d'état* are more likely to succeed, just as their defections from

[3] *La Semaine Africaine*, 18 March 2004.

the regime help latent popular frustration coalesce into outright protest. Autocrats must somehow ensure their loyalty.

Yet doing so is complicated by the fact that an elite's loyalty – whether some intrinsic affinity for the autocrat or simply the elite's returns from an alternative government – cannot be observed. The autocrat can neither measure elite loyalty nor confidently apply a dollar value to it. Indeed, he can purchase loyalty with no more confidence than could any art buyer at an auction. Students of autocratic politics often ignore this, and for good reasons. Doing so enables them to elide one of the central complications of life as an autocrat to focus on other important features of politics; as did Chapter 3. But autocrats do not have this luxury, for purchase loyalty they must.

This may be a uniquely modern problem. For single parties, Brownlee [37] and Slater [166] argue, prevent precisely these sorts of opportunistic defections. By creating a "political wilderness," Slater [166] writes, "robust ruling parties ...prevent elite defection" and forestall "alternative routes to the political summit." In so doing, according to Brownlee [37], "ruling parties ...bridle elite ambitions and bind together otherwise fractious coalitions." In short, robust ruling parties render less relevant an elite's commitment to the regime, because he simply has no choice. There are no viable alternatives, and so he must work inside it. O'Donnell and Schmitter [139] also suggest that "soft-liner" loyalty is a particularly modern problem. For cleavages between hard and soft-liners, they find, are most commonly driven by divergent beliefs about whether the autocratic regime will soon require "electoral legitimation." Robust ruling parties solve this problem as well.

Without access to these single parties, modern autocrats turn to social institutions. For Sassou Nguesso – indeed, for many of his African counterparts – these social institutions take the form of freemasonry lodges, and they force frequent social interaction among members. Sassou Nguesso founded his *Grande Loge du Congo* (GLC) in 1995, during his Paris exile. Section 5.1 narrates the GLC's origins in the colonial period, its creation in Paris, and its evolution since Sassou Nguesso reclaimed power. Virtually all *Brazzavillois* describe the GLC's political significance in the same way:

"*Si tu veux manger, il faut s'initier*." If one wants to occupy a lucrative regime position, that is, one must join. Section 5.1 confirms this with statistical evidence. Section 5.2 explores the advantages and risks of social institutions with the aid of a game theoretic model. It suggests that social institutions serve two central purposes. First, they subject initiates to the scrutiny of the autocrat's family and most trusted aides: the core of the social institution's membership. In so doing, they deter members from participating in anti-regime activity. Second, and as a result, social institutions serve as screening devices. Costly signals of loyalty, these social institutions distinguish elites who accept closer scrutiny from those who do not. Section 5.3 presents evidence – both quantitative and qualitative – of both.

5.1 The Origins and Evolution of the *Grande Loge du Congo*

5.1.1 Dakar, Paris, and Brazzaville

African freemasonry is a peculiar legacy of French colonialism. On May 9, 1781, the *Grande Loge de France* (GLF) gave Sub-Saharan Africa its first freemasonry lodge. Located in Saint-Louis, Senegal, only the expatriate elite claimed membership: military officers, colonial bureaucrats, and affluent businessmen. As the French colonial apparatus expanded, so too did freemasonry. The capital of *Afrique Equatoriale Francaise*, Brazzaville received its first lodge in 1906. By 1930 freemasonry also flourished in Madagascar, Gabon, Benin, Guinea, Mali, Cameroon, and Cote d'Ivoire [15]. Following independence in the early 1960s, lodge membership slowly expanded to the African elite; by the mid-1970s it was a thoroughly African affair. Omar Bongo was the first African ruler to establish his own lodge. Founded in 1976, the *Grande Loge du Gabon* (GLG) assembled the indigenous political and expatriate economic elite. With Gabon's status, at least until the 2000s, as France's leading

African oil supplier, the GLG secured bilateral commercial and political ties [15].[4]

Sassou Nguesso created the GLC in 1995, Chapter 2 recounted, during his Paris exile. Initiated by Abdou Diouf, then the 15-year President of Senegal, Sassou Nguesso had ascended to Master Mason by the time he seized Brazzaville in 1997. Since there is no publicly available roster of GLC initiates, I constructed an annual membership list during my years in Congo from two sources. First, I hired a team of research assistants to position themselves outside the GLC's main meeting lodge; over the course of several weeks in 2010, they recorded everyone who entered and exited. To extend this membership roster to 1995, I conducted a series of interviews with Brazzaville's most astute political observers between 2009 and 2013: local journalists, human rights advocates, former ministers and their counselors, and military officers. I then verified the annual membership roster these interviews yielded with leaked footage from a 2006 initiation ceremony, held in Brazzaville's *Palais du Parlement*.

In so doing, I was able to trace the creation and evolution of Sassou Nguesso's GLC. The left axis of Figure 5.1 displaces the proportion of the general and ministerial corps that claimed membership in Sassou Nguesso's GLC by year, as well as the proportion of the GLC's membership comprised of Sassou Nguesso's family and civil war loyalists. The right axis records the total number of GLC initiates by year. The GLC started small. Its first members were Sassou Nguesso's inner circle: family and longtime collaborators who remained loyal throughout the tumult of the early 1990s. Membership expanded slowly, and in 1999 Sassou Nguesso created something entirely new: *une loge sorcière*, a sorcery masonic lodge. With nephew Jean Dominique Okemba as director and Sassou Nguesso as *président d'honneur*, the new lodge was dubbed *Elikia*, "hope" in the northern Lingala language, a clear reference to Sassou Nguesso's 2002 electoral campaign slogan: *La nouvelle espoir*, or "the new hope." Okemba's appointment as director is a particularly important clue about the GLC's purpose.

[4] There is apparently another account of Bongo's GLG at a French library in Brazzaville, but I have yet to locate it.

As one prominent member of Sassou Nguesso's family told me privately:

> The most important part of managing [the Congolese] government? Information: who is talking to whom, who is transferring large amounts of money to whom. It's no surprise that Jean Domnique [Okemba, the head of the domestic surveillance service,] runs the Freemasonry lodge.[5]

The GLC, members of Sassou Nguesso's family affirm, is a centerpiece of his elite surveillance apparatus. Okemba was the obvious choice for director.

The transition to *Elikia* marked a turning point. Between 2001 and 2004, Figure 5.1 documents, membership spiked. The GLC soon counted among its members virtually all of the Congolese military and ministerial elite: all those who "ate" – who had ascended the ranks of the elite class – had initiated. Sassou Nguesso apparently limited membership as well. The only uninitiated ministers are members of political parties who endorsed Sassou Nguesso during a previous electoral campaign, and whose expected tenures – the topic of Chapters 7 and 6 – are short anyway. Likewise, the only generals excluded from the GLC are those appointed by Sassou Nguesso's predecessors. For since Sassou Nguesso regards these generals as untrustworthy, he refuses them meaningful portfolios anyway.

The political significance of the GLC remains among Brazzaville's worst kept secrets. One diplomat described freemasonry as the "holy grail" of Congolese politics. Understanding Congolese politics, the Western diplomatic community believes, requires understanding Congolese freemasonry.[6] Congolese citizens also emphasize its political relevance. To access the regime's inner circle, they say, "*il faut s'initier*," one simply must initiate. Even the francophone press has taken notice. One recent magazine decried the "damage inflicted by Congolese freemasonry." So important is the GLC to Sas-

[5]Interview with Anonymous, 4 March 2013.

[6]Of the four English language books on Congolese politics, only Knight [99] and Shaxson [162] even mention the term; both note only that Sassou Nguesso and Pascal Lissouba, who won the country's lone fair presidential election, are freemasons. The other two to which I refer are Clark [47] and Ghazvinian [76].

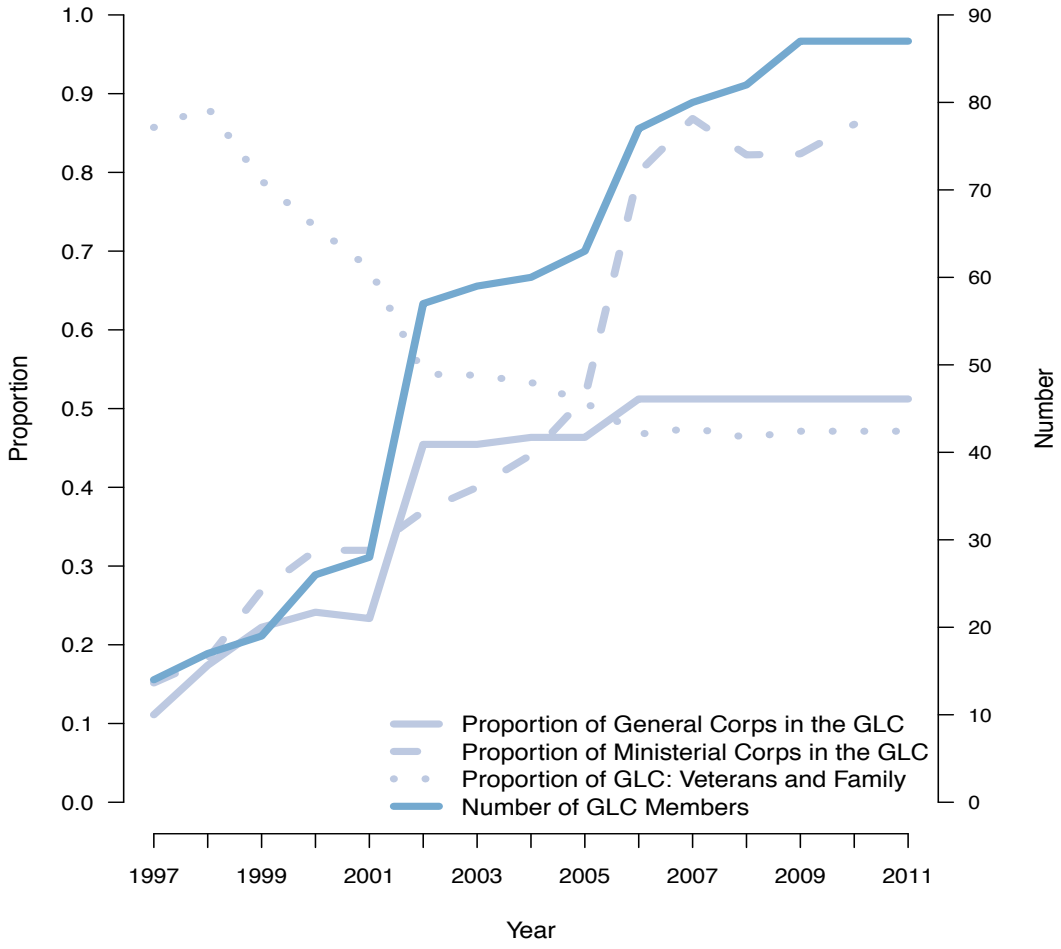

Figure 5.1: The evolution of Sassou Nguesso's GLC. The left axis records the proportion of the general and ministerial corps that has been initiated into the GLC by year, as well as the proportion of the GLC comprise of Sassou Nguesso's family and civil war veterans. The right axis measures the number of GLC initiates by year.

sou Nguesso's political survival, they stated, that it is directly responsible for the country's economic destitution. The Brazzaville government regards such accusations as unacceptable. They routinely earn Congolese citizens a visit from the *ngungi*, the government's quasi-secret police, or a cautionary nighttime phone call. The recent magazine article was published under a pseudonym: *le petit fils du*

defunt roi téké de M'Baya, grandson of the late *téké* king from the village of M'Baya.[7]

5.1.2 Activities and Architecture

Although the GLC's membership is now common knowledge in Brazzaville, its activities are among Brazzaville's best kept secrets. They are, as best anyone can tell, very frequent but mostly quotidian. Members are required to congregate at the Brazzaville lodge on weekday evenings, attend weekend lunches at Brazzaville's finest restaurants, and appear at weekend parties at Mpila, Sassou Nguesso's private compound. Occasionally a new set of initiates will be inducted at the *Palais du Parlement*, which members are required to attend in the presence of foreign dignitaries. Sassou Nguesso attends only these initiation ceremonies, which are marked by pomp and a striking solemnity. After initiates have been seated and opening rituals discharged, Sassou Nguesso is escorted into the room, with his portrait hanging on the wall above the door. Like all freemasonry lodges, the GLC provides charity to members following personal tragedies. Reflecting the affluence of the Congolese elite, these gifts rise upwards of $100, 000. In short, the activities of the lodge appear much less important than the frequent interaction membership forces.

There is, however, one exception to this banality. When Sassou Nguesso transformed the GLC into *Elikia* – the "sorcery" masonic lodge – in 1999, he incorporated the *nzobi* fetish cult, on which initiates are required to swear upon entry. *Nzobi* is widely practiced among Cuvette regionals, and occasionally elsewhere in the north. The *nzobi* cult has been described this way:

> The *nzobi* cult intervenes during conflicts, litigations, or any situation in which one aims to find or discover the guilty party. ...Rather than resolving a dispute between

[7] Although I have a copy of the article, I do not know the title of the magazine that published it. The article was given to me by an elderly Congolese man who was among Sassou Nguesso's drinking buddies in the late 1960s and early 1970s. A southerner, this man now detests the Sassou Nguesso government. He keeps the article as evidence of Sassou Nguesso's malfeasance; he stores it with his most valuable positions, for he fears that Congolese authorities, if they found it, would incarcerate him. At some point I hope to locate the author among the Congolese expatriate community in Paris.

> two parties, the *nzobi* cult simply finds the guilty party and bestows upon him a mystical sanction wished by the aggrieved party.

During the initiation ritual, everyone understands, new members implicitly swear loyalty to Sassou Nguesso and explicitly acknowledge the possibility of retribution for malfeasance. The GLC is designed, in short, so that its initiates feel tremendous pressure to acquiesce to the regime, notwithstanding any transient disagreements they may have in the future.

Unsurprisingly, the GLC is regarded as a deadly serious topic in Congo. Its citizens generally refuse to discuss it, privately or publicly, for fear of physical retribution. Following one interview with a particularly high ranking member of Brazzaville's Catholic church – himself a freemason, I soon learned, despite the Archbishop's staunch opposition – I received a thinly veiled threat, demanding that I ask no further questions about the topic. The prohibition even extends to Congolese expatriates in Paris. Somewhat remarkably, there exists a history of Congolese freemasonry; it was authored by Joseph Badila, a Congolese citizen who resides mostly in Paris. The account makes virtually no mention of Sassou Nguesso's GLC.[8]

The best sources of information about the GLC are often the alienated families of recent initiates – particularly those based in Paris, far from the watchful eye of Sassou Nguesso's domestic surveillance apparatus – as well as colonels and one-time ministerial counselors who refused initiation. GLC membership, they invariably say, is a public signal that "you are one of them" and "you can be trusted."[9] By refusing initiation, moreover, these colonels and counselors knowingly forgo opportunities for advancement. So why do they do it? "My dignity is not for sale," is a common response, particularly among Congolese citizens who would happily participate in an armed uprising.[10] And because of the stigma attached to freemasonry in an overwhelmingly Catholic religious environment, initiates are often repudiated by their extended families, despite the initiates' newly

[8] See Badila [15].

[9] Interviews with Pierre Mboungou Mboungou, 12 November 2011, and Guy Mafimba, 15 December 2011.

[10] Interview with Colonel Émile N., 28 July 2010.

lavish lifestyles. Said one opposition activist after the initiation of his cousin: "We greet each other whenever we cross paths, but we will never be close again."[11]

The GLC has even shaped Brazzaville's urban landscape. In 2004 Sassou Nguesso dispatched Jean-Paul Pigasse to Paris to solicit donations from French companies with ambitions in the Congolese market.[12] For Sassou Nguesso had decided to build a $10 million mausoleum – a glass and marble affair, complete with neoclassical columns and a dome – to its first colonizer, Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza, a native Italian who claimed the right bank of the Congo river for France. De Brazza was, quite literally, the French counterpart to Henry Morton Stanley, who claimed the left bank for Belgium and whose brutality was immortalized in Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness*. De Brazza was also a freemason. He joined at the behest of Jules Ferry, de Brazza's family cautions, who underwrote many of his voyages. De Brazza's remains were exhumed from Algiers on September 3, 2006, and deposited in the new mausoleum on October 3, before Sassou Nguesso, Omar Bongo, and François Bozizé, all freemasons. Whether the memorial was actually erected as a masonic temple is unclear. But de Brazza's family believes so. They cite the regime's refusal to place a cross over de Brazza's tomb, per their agreement, and the widespread incorporation of masonic symbols.[13] So offended were they that in 2008 they filed a lawsuit against the Congolese government in French courts. The family denounced the memorial as a "political instrument," an initially surprising claim given that virtually all Congolese citizens regard it as a "monument to shame" and an "indignity to millions of Africans around the world" [24]. The family, a confidant confirmed to me, was referring to its use as a masonic temple.

Sassou Nguesso's closest allies occasionally even construct their own masonic temples as expressions of their loyalty. Born in 1955, Alexis Vincent Gomès was a childhood friend of Antoinette Sassou Nguesso and has been a prominent lawyer in Pointe-Noire since the 1980s. He is also among the

[11] Interview with Benjamin Moutsila, 5 January 2011.
[12] *La Lettre du Continent*, 3 June 2004.
[13] Interview with Jean-Marie Monange, 21 February 2012. See also *La Lettre du Continent*, 3 July 2008.

richest men in Congo. In the late 1980s he amassed a fortune when the Sassou Nguesso government agreed to quietly dispose of radioactive waste off the Pointe-Noire coast; he reportedly handled the legal documentation. Gomès invested his new fortune wisely. In addition to purchasing a series of Pointe-Noire hotels, he owns Congo's leading Congolese construction firm, Batîr, the recipient of countless government contracts. Among the first GLC initiates, Gomès constructed a sprawling village 15 miles north of Pointe-Noire. Built mostly of imported marble on a cliff overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, it counts five mansions, two nightclubs, a professional kitchen, a banquet hall for several hundred guests, and a secret masonic temple that incorporates the GLC's iconography. Sassou Nguesso's favor, quite explicitly, was the target of Gomès' ambitions. The president visits frequently.[14]

5.1.3 The PCT, *Refondation*, Refusing Membership

Sassou Nguesso extends membership "invitations" strategically, and there are deadly consequences for those who refuse. Justin Lekoundzou personified the PCT old guard that Sassou Nguesso targeted with *refondation*. Lekoundzou co-founded the party in 1968, participated in Ngouabi's 1997 assassination, and then occupied a series of ministerial portfolios over the next four decades: Minister of Industry in the 1970s, Minister of Finance throughout the 1980s, and Minister of Defense in the late 1990s and early 2000s. At precisely the moment Sassou Nguesso initiated *refondation* – when Sassou Nguesso was most concerned about Lekoundzou's response – he offered GLC membership.

Lekoundzou refused, for he had no intention of accepting his marginalization. With Sassou Nguesso resolutely committed, Lekoundzou began plotting a *coup d'état* with disgruntled Téké military officers and undertook a media offensive in Brazzaville newspapers.[15] In September 2005

[14] I received a tour of the facility from Gomès' wife in 2012.

[15] Interview with Guy Mafimba, 15 December 2011. See also *La Semaine Africaine*, 24 October 2006.

he denounced *refondation* to the press and demanded an end to the "demagogy and bad faith" of its proponents.[16] With no progress, he then toyed with a "popular uprising." In October 2006 Lekoundzou organized a congress of PCT members opposed to the dissolution. Attended by thousands, Lekoundzou's fiery speeches culminated in a series of riots that nearly set Brazzaville alight. Traveling in Ethiopia, Sassou Nguesso was so concerned that he ordered General Charles Mondjo, then military chief of staff, to disperse them by any means necessary.[17] Sassou Nguesso summoned Lekoundzou to Mpila on October 21, upon his return, and Lekoundzou refused to back down. He criticized "*la gestion familiale du pouvoir*" – the domination of Sassou Nguesso's family within the regime – as well as the myriad new political parties that had reduced the PCT to one party among many in the present's RMP coalition.[18]

Faced with the prospect of a violent uprising from within the PCT, Sassou Nguesso "called for an end to PCT divisions," a euphemism for concession.[19] Lekoundzou, somehow, won the battle to preserve the PCT. It nearly cost him his life. After surviving an assassination attempt, for which he was treated in Paris,[20] Lekoundzou created a rival sorcery outfit with Marion Mandzimba Ewango, himself a Master Mason in another lodge. Dubbed the *Association Marien Ngouabi et Ethique*, Lekoundzou sought to "harness the spirit" of PCT founder Marien Ngouabi, also a freemason, and provide a "shield" against the GLC. The *Association*'s more practical effect was to create a focal point for Sassou Nguesso's opponents, a forum where they could plan Sassou Nguesso's removal. Sassou Nguesso refuses to authorize its existence.

[16] *La Semaine Africaine*, 2 September 2005.
[17] *La Lettre du Continent*, 26 October 2006.
[18] *La Lettre du Continent*, 26 October 2006.
[19] *La Semaine Africaine*, 18 October 2006.
[20] *La Semaine Africaine*, 28 July 2006. See also *Talassa*, 11 August 2006.

5.1.4 Predicting GLC Membership

To ascend to the regime's highest ranks, virtually all Congolese citizens believe, "one simply must initiate." The quantitative evidence confirms this. The *y*-axis of Figure 5.2 records the proportion of GLC initiates and non-initiates with the personal characteristics identified along the *x*-axis. Sassou Nguesso's inner circle remains central to the GLC. More than 15 years after the civil war, nearly 40% of GLC initiates are veterans of Sassou Nguesso's war effort and nearly 15% are family members. GLC initiates are disproportionately from Sassou Nguesso's Mbochi ethnic group as well. Although Mbochis constitute only 3% of Congo's political elite, the GLC's membership in 2011 was nearly 25% Mbochi. GLC initiates, moreover, are universally members of Sassou Nguesso's PCT political party; by contrast, only half of the non-initiates in the dataset are PCT members. Nearly all of the GLC's initiates occupy prominent roles in Sassou Nguesso's government. More than 80% hold political appointments of some kind, nearly 40% are ministers, and roughly 25% occupy senior roles in the security apparatus.

To probe the predictors of GLC membership more systematically, I estimate the probability that elite *i* in year *t* is a member of Sassou Nguesso's GLC as a function of a variety of factors: whether elite *i* occupies a high level portfolio in year *t*, is a relative of Sassou Nguesso, part of his concubine network, a veteran of his civil war effort, a member of the PCT or an allied party, an Mbochi co-ethnic, the distance of his birth village to Oyo, and several others. The results appear in Table 5.1 and are visualized in Figure 5.3. As virtually all *Brazzavillois* attest, the best predictor of GLC membership is simply the relevance of an appointee's portfolio to regime survival. Elites given trivial government portfolios – perhaps one of the nearly 100 positions on the Economic and Social Council – or excluded altogether have virtually no chance of GLC membership. Occupying at least a mid-level portfolio in the regime changes that. For those elites, who are almost always members of the geographic in-group and the PCT, the probability of GLC membership rises to nearly 0.5. The higher

Table 5.1: Determinants of GLC Membership

	GLC Initiate Logit
Mid Level Appointment	1.783**
	(0.155)
High Level Appointment	2.069**
	(0.165)
Civil War Veteran	1.293**
	(0.155)
Family	0.071
	(0.262)
Concubine	0.016
	(0.315)
PCT/Allied Party	3.675**
	(0.353)
Oyo Distance	-0.001†
	(0.001)
Mbochi	0.609**
	(0.226)
Kouilou	0.952**
	(0.257)
Likouala	1.366**
	(0.249)
Year Fixed Effects	Yes
N	3459
Significance levels: † : 10% * : 5% ** : 1%	

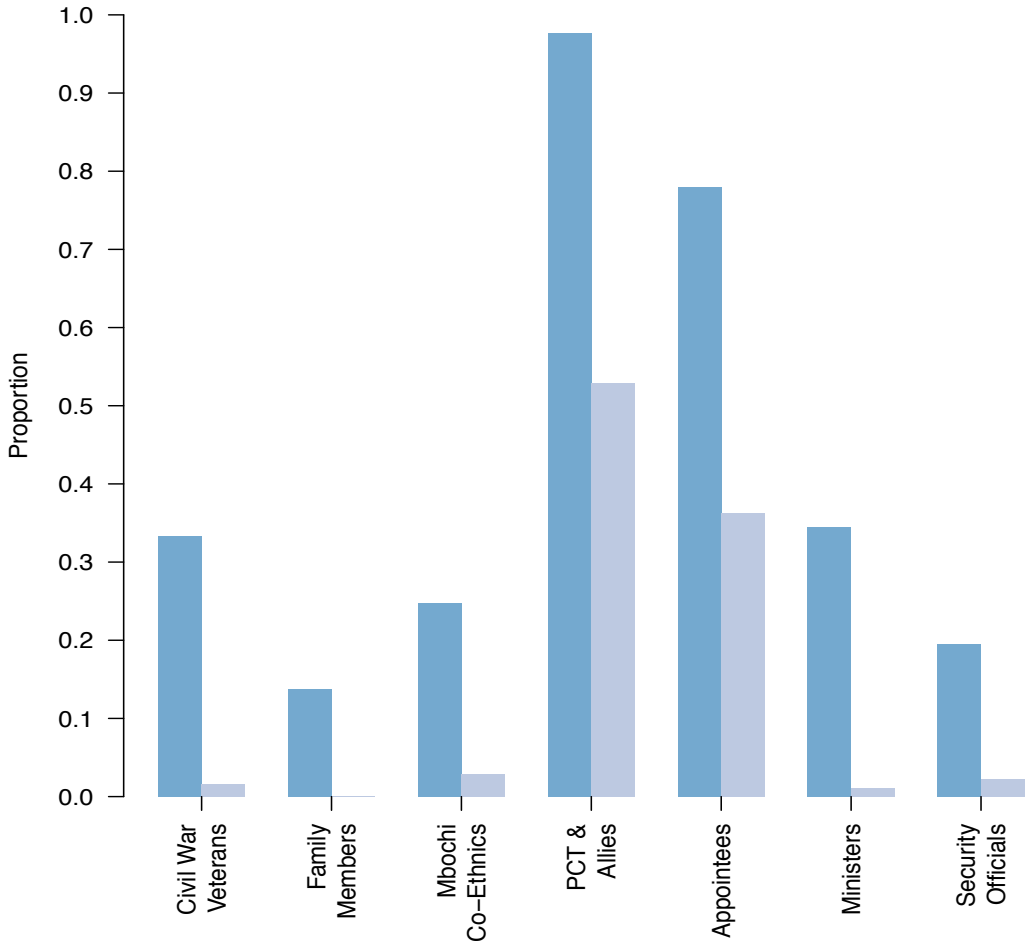

Figure 5.2: The characteristics of GLC initiates and non-initiates in 2011.

one rises through the regime – and, of course, the closer to Oyo one is born – increases the probability of GLC membership still further, now to roughly 0.6. Civil war veterans comprised the initial group of loyalists, and their probabilities of membership are highest: nearly 0.8. As a result, the map of initiates' birth villages in Figure 5.4 looks almost identical to the map of high level appointees in Figure 3.3.

Students of autocratic politics often believe – indeed, seem to advise – that autocrats keep their

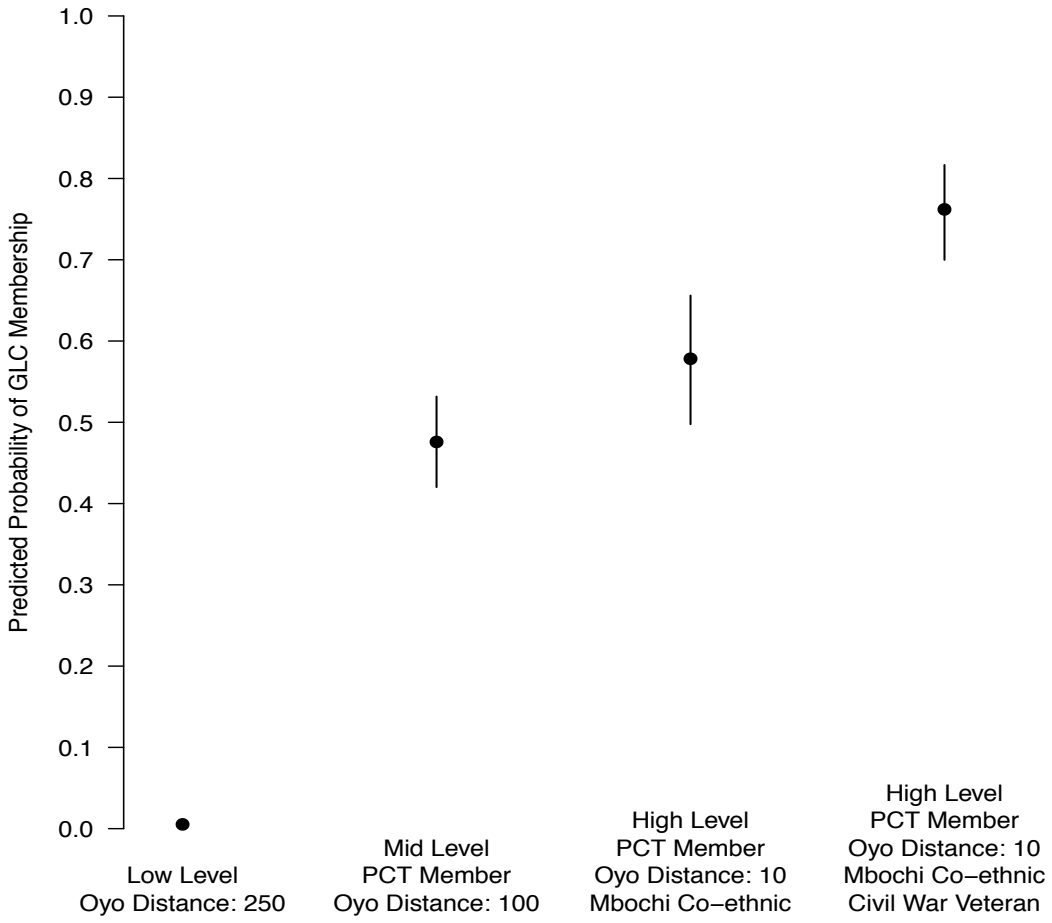

Figure 5.3: Predicting GLC membership based on the results in Table 5.1.

appointees separate. Elites who lack the means to communicate, the arguments generally go, are unable to conspire against the autocrat [179, 3, 142, 27, 28]. Indeed, there is some evidence for this. Mobute Sese Seko ruled Zaire so successfully, Gould [80] teaches us, because he rendered trust among his appointees virtually impossible:

> The frequent cabinet shuffles and transfers of officials from region to region ...may be explained as largely reflections of the president's skill at using people while they can

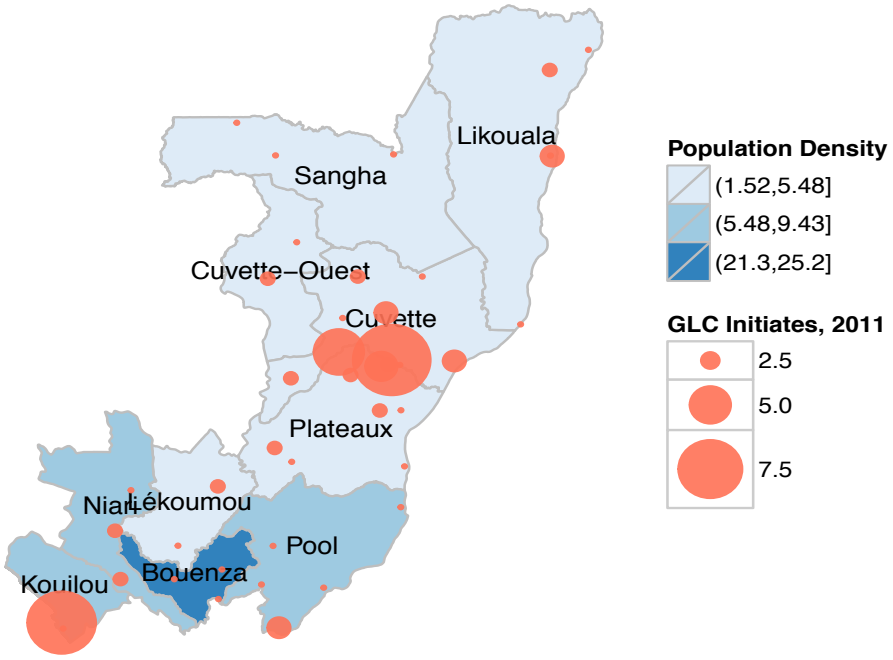

Figure 5.4: The birth villages of GLC initiates in 2011. It looks virtually identical to the map of high level appointees in Figure 3.3.

> provide assistance to him and at the same time keeping factions separated from each other, thus preventing autonomous power centers from developing [80].

Yet increasingly Africa's autocrats keep their factions together, quite deliberately. The map in Figure 5.5 displays the countries where autocrats operate their very own freemasonry lodges.[21] Sassou Nguesso initiated some of them himself.

[21] See, for instance, the April 13, 2013, issue of *Jeune Afrique*.

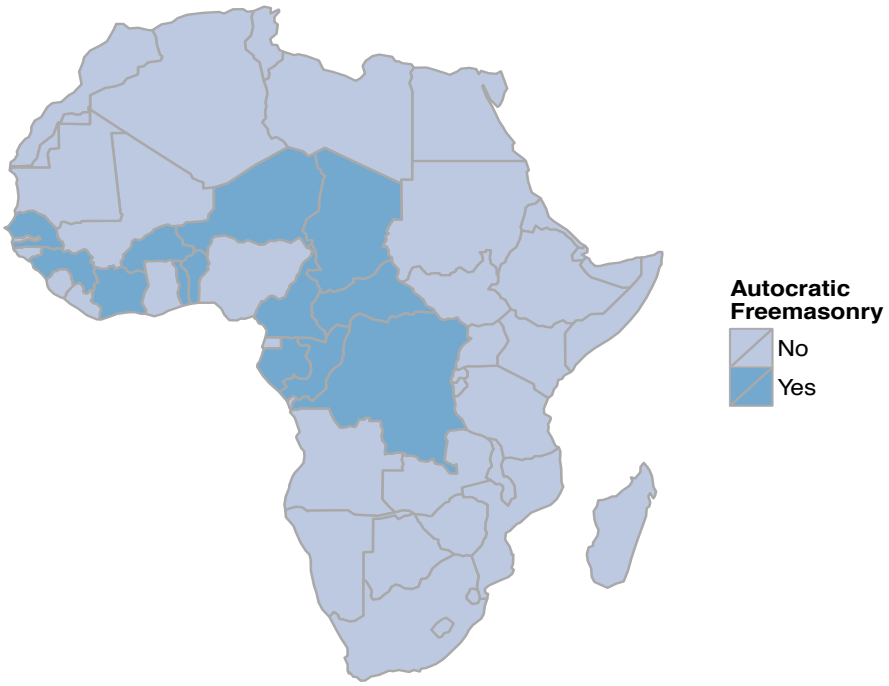

Figure 5.5: The shaded countries are ruled by presidents formally linked to freemasonry. Many operate their very own lodges, virtually identical to the *Grande Lodge du Congo*, and some were even initiated by Sassou Nguesso himself.

To make sense of the *Grande Loge du Congo* – Sassou Nguesso's apparent requirement that all high level appointees join, the apparent reluctance of some to do so, and its evolution over time – I again turn to game theory.

5.2 A Theory of Social Institutions

This model departs in two ways from existing theoretical models, including the one employed in Chapter 3. First, existing models generally assume autocrats know the participation constraints of their elites – that is, what elites stand to gain from alternative autocrats – and hence give them the minimum required to secure their loyalty. Second, they assume that autocrats assemble the smallest coalition that can prevent a *coup d'état* by disgruntled elites [39, 3, 142]. They also generate a result that is inconsistent with the empirical record: Since elites are easily bought off, coups should never actually occur. These assumptions also preclude studying a range of features of autocratic politics.

I relax these assumptions to study how Sassou Nguesso other modern autocrats might employ these social institutions as screening devices. The model below conceptualizes the autocrat as confronting an informational challenge. Since elite loyalty is unobservable, the autocrat cannot know precisely how much revenue he must share with his elite to prevent a coup, nor which elites are most costly to purchase. Coups then emerge probabilistically, a function of the autocrat's revenue sharing decision and the number of elites left unsatisfied.

5.2.1 Environment

As before, I consider a society comprised of an autocrat D, his inner circle L of family and longtime friends, a challenger $-D$, and an in-group of size n indexed by i. The η_L members of the inner circle receive the regime's most sensitive positions and are unwilling to engage in coups. This model takes the autocrat's inner circle as fixed and lets him form a social institution in which the inner circle interacts with members of the elite. The autocrat possesses some amount of coalition power $\vartheta_D \in (0, 1)$, which is common knowledge among elites. I refer to ϑ_D as the autocrat's survival parameter. As before, it captures the probability that the autocrat is able to survive any anti-regime activity in which elite i engages. When the game begins, the autocrat sets amount b^D of state revenue R to

share with the n members of his elite, while the challenger offers to share amount b^{-D} if he assumes power.

Now, however, elites are differentiated by their preference for the challenger ε_i. While the autocrat does not observe ε_i, he does know its distribution across the elite population:

$$\varepsilon_i \sim \text{Unif}\left[-\frac{n}{2\varphi}, \frac{n}{2\varphi}\right] \tag{5.1}$$

where $\varphi \geq 1$ reflects the autocrat's beliefs about the distribution of ε_i. As $\varphi \to 1$ the autocrat views his elite as more heterogeneous, with some very loyal and others much less so. These assumptions correspond to our intuitions about life as an autocrat. His elite stands to gain something from removing him, but the autocrat does not know precisely how much.

Elite i may opt to support the challenger $-D$'s bid for power by engaging in anti-regime activity. In particular, elite i engages in anti-regime activity if his utility from doing so exceeds that from supporting the incumbent autocrat:

$$\frac{b^D}{n} < (1 - \vartheta_D)\frac{b^{-D} + \varepsilon_i}{n}$$

where $1 - \vartheta_D$ gives the probability that elite i's efforts result in a *coup d'état*. Again, this is my interpretation of "divide and rule" politics. Although many elites may engage in anti-regime activity, their efforts are uncoordinated, for communication is made difficult by the widespread suspicion that characterizes life in autocracies. Hence from elite i's perspective, the probability that his anti-regime activities yield a successful coup is simply whatever coalition power the autocrat is unable to command $1 - \vartheta_D$. The probability of a coup from the autocrat's perspective is the proportion of elites who engage in anti-regime activity:

$$\Pr_D(\text{Coup}) = \frac{1}{n} \times N(\text{Anti-Regime Activity})$$

When setting b^D at the game's outset, I also let the autocrat decide whether to create a social institution. If he does, the autocrat also selects its size and constituent elite. If elites accept the autocrat's invitation to join, they then interact with members of the inner circle L. I denote the members of this social institution as belonging to set J; the elites who do not join the social institution are, by definition, included in set K. Since all members of the elite are either included in the social institution or excluded:

$$n = n_J + n_K$$

This social institution has two effects. First, students of autocratic politics have long believed that communication networks enable elites to coordinate their anti-regime activities. Second, since the social institution forces frequent interaction between the inner circle L and n_J elites who accept the autocrat's invitation, their anti-regime activities are more likely to be detected. I model these two effects as increasing and decreasing, respectively, the probability that the anti-regime activities of social institution members yield a *coup d'état*:

$$\Pr_D(\text{Coup}|i \in J) = (1 - \vartheta_D)\,\varepsilon \times \Pr(ND)$$

The parameter $\varepsilon > 1$ captures the conventional wisdom: It accommodates the possibility that frequent interaction among potentially malfeasant elites increases the probability of a *coup d'état*. The term $\Pr(ND)$, or the probability of non-detection, captures the second effect. It gives the probability that social institution members' anti-regime activities go undetected by members of the inner circle. As $\Pr(ND) \to 0$, the probability of *coups d'état* emerging from within the social institution falls to 0. Likewise, as ε gets large, members of the social institution coordinate more effectively, and their anti-regime activities are more likely to reach fruition.

I make two assumptions about Pr (ND). First, as the number of elites in the social institution n_J increases, the probability of non-detection increases as well. Put simply, as the number of potentially malfeasant elites in the social institution increases, the inner circle's monitoring ability falls, since there are more potentially malfeasant elites to monitor. Second, as the size of the inner circle n_L increases, the probability of non-detection Pr (ND) falls. Intuitively, a larger inner circle means each social institution member is monitored more intensively, and hence their conspiracies are more likely to be detected. To facilitate an analytical solution, I parameterize these assumptions as

$$\Pr(ND) \quad = \quad \frac{n_J}{n_L} \tag{5.2}$$

where $\beta \in (0, 1]$. Intuitively, as β gets large, the inner circle's ability to effectively monitor each additional member of the social institution n_J declines.

These two assumptions are visualized in Figures 5.6 through 5.9. In Figure 5.6, the social institution includes as many loyalists as potentially malfeasant elites; in Figure 5.7, by contrast, the number of potentially malfeasant elites is much higher. Accordingly, the probability of non-detection Pr (ND) in Figure 5.7 is much higher than in Figure 5.6. In Figure 5.8 the number of loyalists has increased, though the ratio of potentially malfeasant elites to loyalists remains slightly higher than in Figure 5.6, and so the probability of non-detection Pr (ND) is higher as well. Figure 5.9 visualizes the effects of the coordination advantage ε. As the links between potentially malfeasant elites grow weaker – as indicated by the dotted lines in Figure 5.9, their coordination advantage ε declines as well.

The coordination advantage among potentially malfeasant elites, given by ε, may fall for a number of reasons. Most notably, from Chapter 4, autocrats may enjoy sufficient resources to finance a parallel government, which generates compliance by fostering competition among elites for the autocrat's favor. As potentially malfeasant elites are forced to compete against each other, communi-

cation among them – even in the context of the social institution – becomes far more dangerous.

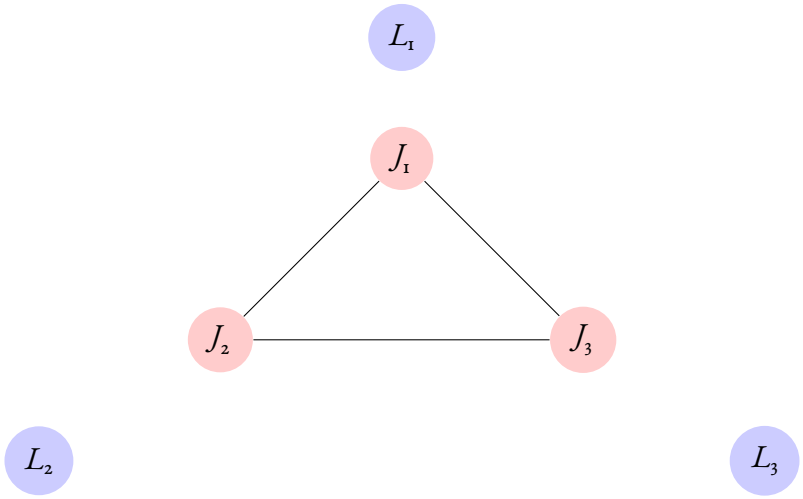

Figure 5.6: A social institution with loyalists denoted by L_i and potentially malfeasant elites denoted by J_i. The coordination advantage ε among potentially malfeasant elites is represented by the solid lines between them. Since the social institution includes as many loyalists as potentially malfeasant elites, the probability of non-detection $\Pr(ND)$ is low.

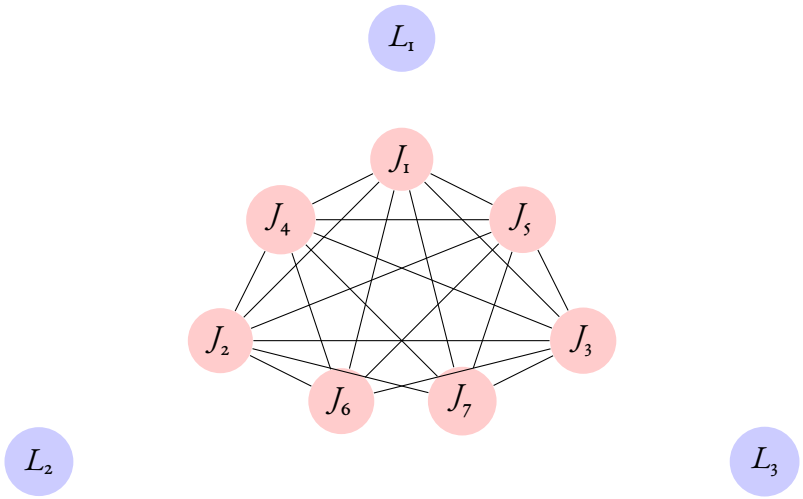

Figure 5.7: Since the number of potentially malfeasant elites in the social institution has increased from Figure 5.6, the probability of non-detection $\Pr(ND)$ is higher.

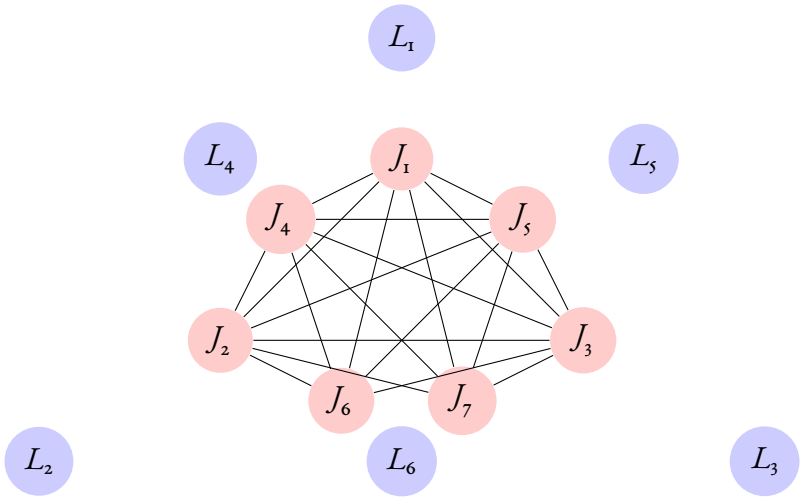

Figure 5.8: The number of loyalists has increased relative to the number of potentially malfeasant elites in Figure 5.7, and hence the probability of non-detection $\Pr(ND)$ is lower. However, the ratio of loyalists to potentially malfeasant elites is not as high as in Figure 5.6, and so the probability of non-detection $\Pr(ND)$ is still higher.

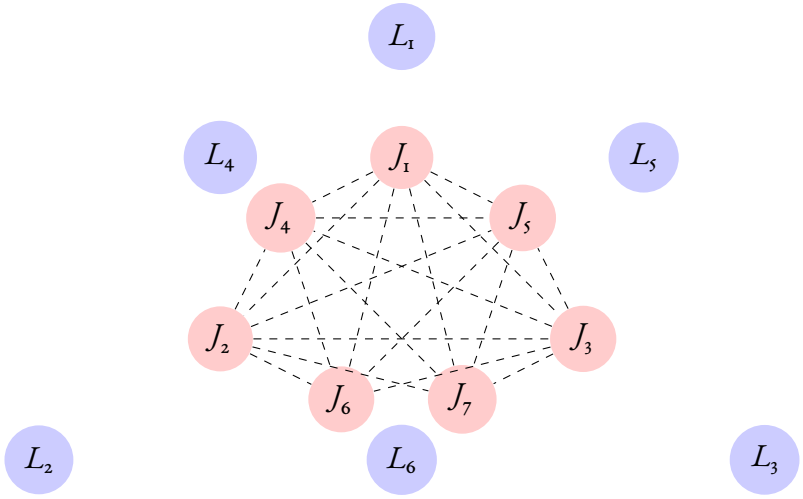

Figure 5.9: The solid lines that connect potentially malfeasant elites have been replaced by dotted lines, indicating that the coordination advantage ε is weaker than in Figures 5.6 through 5.8. Since the ratio of loyalists to potentially malfeasant elites remains unchanged, so too does the probability of non-detection $\Pr(ND)$.

Finally, I assume the autocrat can impose a tax $c > 0$ on elites who opt to remain outside the social institution. Intuitively, this tax c may simply come in the form of less lucrative regime portfolios

or, in the extreme, some probability of assassination.

By modifying the probability that the anti-regime activities of social institution members yield *coups d'état*, the social institution effectively modifies the autocrat's survival parameter ϑ_D. The probability that the autocrat is deposed by elite i's anti-regime activities – averaged over the entire in-group – is now

$$(1 - \vartheta_D)\left[\frac{n_J}{n}\varepsilon \times \Pr(ND) + \frac{n_K}{n}\right]$$

where $\frac{n_J}{n}$ gives the proportion of the elite population included in the social institution and $\frac{n_K}{n}$ gives the proportion excluded.

The autocrat's challenge is twofold. The autocrat must decide what amount of state resources b^D to share with his in-group, without knowing the precise amount necessary to "buy off" each individual elite. As the residual claimant on state resources, however, the autocrat prefers to set b^D as low as possible. The autocrat balances his interest in self-enrichment with the probability that dissatisfied elites engage in anti-regime activities, which yield *coups d'état* with some probability. The autocrat's utility depends on whether he is removed from power:

$$u_D = \begin{cases} R - b^D & \text{if he retains power} \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

The autocrat may choose to create a social institution, which modifies his coalition power – either increases or reduces it – by forcing frequent interaction between the inner circle and social institution members. If the autocrat creates a social institution, he also chooses its size.

The timing of the game is visualized in Figure 5.10.

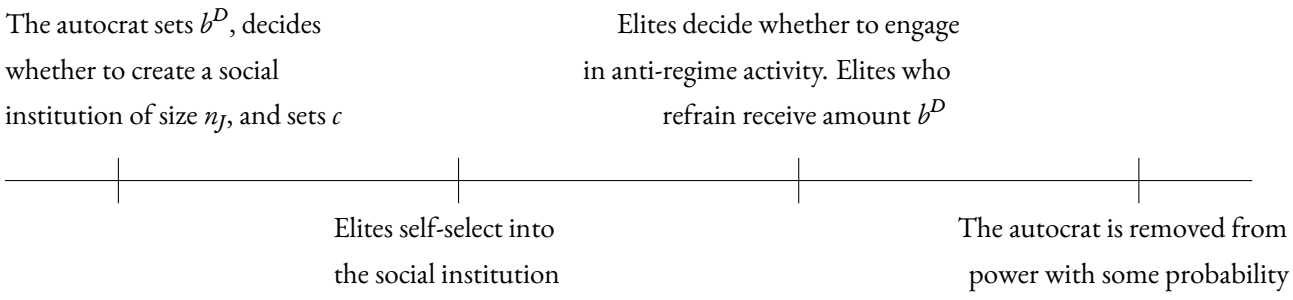

Figure 5.10: Timing of the social institution game.

5.2.2 Results

The results are summarized in Proposition 3.

Proposition 3 ("Unite and Rule"). *Assume the challenger is unable to commit to b^{-D} ex ante, and let $\Omega = 1 - \frac{n_J^*}{n}\frac{}{1+}$. The autocrat creates a social institution when*

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{1}{Pr^*(ND)} &> \varepsilon \\ \beta &> 0 \end{aligned} \tag{5.3}$$

The autocrat creates a social institution of size

$$n_J^* = \left[\frac{n_L}{(1+\beta)\,\varepsilon}\right]^{\frac{1}{}}$$

The equilibrium non-detection probability is

$$Pr^{*}\left(ND\right) \quad = \quad \frac{1}{\left(1+\beta\right)\varepsilon}$$

the incumbent autocrat sets

$$b^{D*} \quad = \quad \frac{R-\frac{n}{2}}{2-\left(1-\vartheta_{-D}\right)\Omega}$$

The number of elites who voluntarily join the social institution is

$$N^{*}\left(\textit{Join Voluntarily}\right) \quad = \quad \frac{n}{2}+\frac{\varphi b^{D*}\vartheta}{n}$$

The number of elites whose compliance can be induced by membership in the social institution is

$$N^{*}\left(\textit{Compliance Induced}\right) \quad = \quad \frac{\varphi b^{D*}}{n}\left[\frac{\beta\left(1-\vartheta_{D}\right)}{1+\beta}\right]$$

Assume $n_{J}^{*} > N^{*}\left(\textit{Join Voluntarily}\right)$. Then the autocrat sets c^{*} to ensure that enough elites whose compliance can be induced from the social institution join, and no more. Then the number of elites who engage in anti-regime activity is between

$$N^{*}\left(\textit{Anti-Regime Activity}\right) \quad \in \quad \left(\frac{n}{2}-\frac{\varphi b^{D*}}{n}\left(\frac{\beta+\vartheta}{1+\beta}\right),\frac{n}{2}-\frac{\varphi b^{D*}\vartheta}{n}\right]$$

which sets the equilibrium probability of a coup d'état.

Modern African autocrats create social institutions, Proposition 3 suggests, to exploit the loyalty of an inner circle. Facilitating social ties among potentially malfeasant elites increases the probability of a *coup d'état*. But autocrats accept this risk if their inner circles are able to detect nascent conspir-

acies with sufficiently high probability. In the context of the model, this occurs because the inner circle is sufficiently large or the autocrat can minimize the coordination advantage afforded by the social institution to potentially malfeasant elites.

Expanding the social institution yields a range of benefits. Expansion renders anti-regime activity less attractive for members by subjecting them to the watchful eyes of the autocrat's inner circle. *Coups d'état*, since they are more likely to be detected, become costly. Consequently, as the social institution expands, the total number of elites who engage in anti-regime activity falls. As the probability of a *coup d'etat* falls with it, the autocrat can share less state revenue with the elite, since he has less to fear. Social institution monitoring and revenue sharing are thus substitutes. The autocrat creates the social institution to render survival less costly. With the amount of revenue the autocrat shares with his elite falling and the probability of a coup falling as well, the autocrat's utility increases as the social institution expands. Loyalist monitoring, in short, is a complement to – not a substitute for – the autocrat's other monitoring technologies. Again, Chapter 4 suggested, good things for autocrats go together. When autocrats are strong, they have access to a range of devices that render them stronger still.

Figure 5.11 visualizes the model's results as a function of ε_i. The x-axis gives the range of ε_i values across the in-group. For a given value of b^{D*}, elites for whom $\varepsilon_i \leq \varepsilon^{L*}$ will voluntarily join the social institution. The social institution, however, can generate the compliance of those elites for whom ε_i falls between ε^{L*} and ε^{C*}. Intuitively, if these elites can be compelled to join, the intensive monitoring reduces their returns from anti-regime activity enough to generate their compliance. The autocrat thus imposes a tax c^* to create his optimally sized social institution. In turn, all elites with ε_i values to the left of n_J^* become members. The social institution generates the loyalty of its members, reduces aggregate anti-regime activity, and increases the autocrat's probability of survival.

Proposition 3 yields three other insights. First, the very act of joining the social institution is a costly signal. Since membership entails more intensive monitoring, anti-regime activity is more

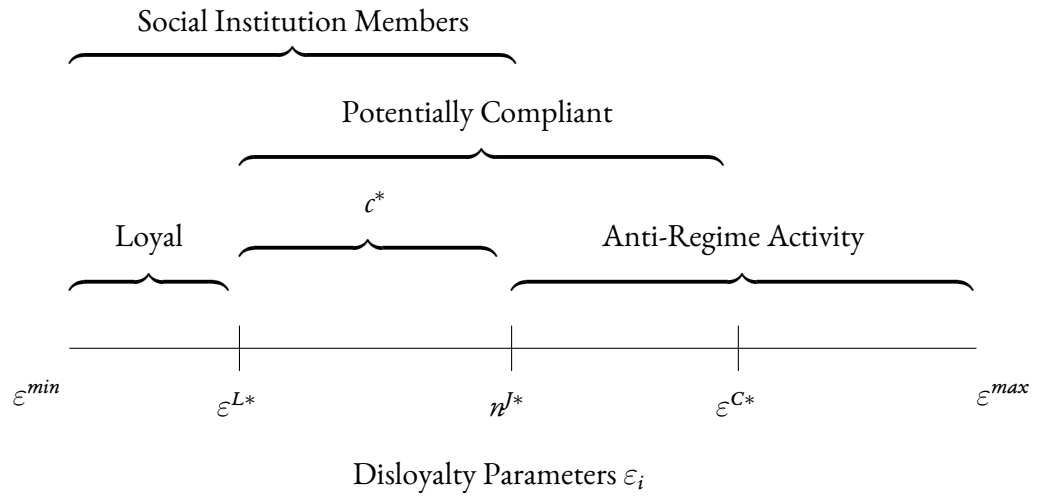

Figure 5.11: The distribution of elites, who differentiated by ε_i values. Elites with ε_i values less than ε^{L*} never engage in anti-regime activity; elite with ε_i values between ε^{L*} and ε^{C*} can be made loyal by the social institution; elites with ε_i values greater than ε^{C*} will engage in anti-regime activity even in the social institution. The autocrat sets c^* to compel elites with ε_i values between ε^{L*} and n^{J*} to join.

perilous. Therefore, elites who willingly join identify themselves as trustworthy, and receive the regime's sensitive positions. In the lexicon of game theory, the social institution forces a separating equilibrium. The autocrat goes from knowing virtually nothing about elite loyalty to certainty about which members of the elite he must fear most. The model thus explains why, as he sought to abolish the PCT, Sassou Nguesso offered Justin Lekoundzou and other party elders GLC membership: Sassou Nguesso doubted their loyalties, and he benefited from testing it. The model also explains why Lekoundzou and others were so loathe to join. They responded to the PCT's impending "liquidation" by exploring the possibility of a *coup d'état* or popular uprising, neither of which would be well served by the additional monitoring that GLC membership would entail.

Second, the autocrat sharply limits the size of the social institution. As equation (5.2) makes clear, the quality of social institution monitoring falls with the number of potentially malfeasant elites included. Hence even if the number of elites who voluntarily join the social institution is greater than

the autocrat's optimal social institution size, the autocrat turns willing members away to ensure that those who gain admission are appropriately monitored. This explains why so many more Congolese elites want to join than actually do. They are simply not permitted.

Third, since the social institution confers a variety of advantages on the autocrat, he may well prefer a larger institution than the voluntary entrance mechanism provides. In this case, the autocrat levies a tax c^* on all non-members, which renders non-membership costly. This tax may take the form of foregone coalition returns or some positive probability of assassination. The autocrat, however, is careful to limit the size of the tax c^*, enabling him to recruit just enough elites to satisfy his optimal social institution size n_J^*.

5.3 The *Grande Loge du Congo*, the Parallel Government, and Elite Behavior

Proposition 3 explains a range of otherwise puzzling features from Section 5.1: why the regime's most critical positions are reserved for initiates, how Sassou Nguesso selects new initiates, and why some prospective initiates refuse membership despite the risks it entails. Proposition 3 suggests two other possibilities. First, the GLC's expansion may be tightly connected to Sassou Nguesso's ability to control the coordination effect among new initiates. Second, for many, GLC membership should *cause* many to engage in less anti-regime activity than they would otherwise.

5.3.1 Expansion and the Parallel Government

Among the most striking features of Sassou Nguesso's GLC is its recent vintage. It was created only in 1995, as he prepared to seize Brazzaville, and not during the 1980s, when he ruled Congo as an ostensibly Marxist dictator. Why did Sassou Nguesso eschew social institution monitoring in the 1980s and embrace it upon his 1997 return?

Proposition 3 suggests the answer lies in the size of his inner circle, his confidence in its loyalty,

and its capacity to monitor. Sassou Nguesso seized power in 1979 as a "first among equals," and he was as suspicious of his elite as his predecessors should have been of him [20, 47]. His inner circle was small and, with his sons and nephews still young, he had no way to expand it. Indeed, the great irony of the 1997 civil war was how well it served Sassou Nguesso's longer term interests. Confident his 1992 decline was definitive, most of Sassou Nguesso's 1980s allies adjusted to the democratic landscape by condemning his atrocities and trumpeting their democratic credentials. The tumult of the 1990s, in short, provided Sassou Nguesso a screening device: His true loyalists refused posts in the new government, decamped with Sassou Nguesso to Paris or their native regions, and then fought in the Cobra militia during the 1997 war. These loyalists – as well as his sons and nephews, now grown – constituted Sassou Nguesso's inner circle upon his return to power, and they were the GLC's first members. Between 80% and 90% of the GLC's initiates prior to 2000 were family members and civil war veterans. Accordingly, the proportion of GLC initiates who comprised the inner circle declined only in 2002, when GLC membership began its precipitous rise.

Sassou Nguesso expanded the GLC between 2001 and 2005. Figure 5.12 shows that this coincided precisely with the expansion of his parallel government apparatus. Proposition 3 makes sense of this. The left y-axis records the mean number of appointees who occupy identical regime portfolios. As Chapter 4 made clear, these appointees perform essentially identical tasks, and thus compete for Sassou Nguesso's favor; these tournaments enable Sassou Nguesso to generate elite compliance even in the absence of recourse to violence. Figure 5.12 suggests that, upon assuming power, between one and two elites were appointed to each of the regime's ministerial and senior military portfolios. Around 2002, precisely when the GLC's membership spiked, Sassou Nguesso began appointing between two and three elites to each regime portfolio. In the context of the model, ε declined; competition fostered by the parallel government apparatus rendered elite communication much less threatening, which enabled Sassou Nguesso to expand his GLC. Indeed, the correlation coefficient between parallel government size and GLC membership is 0.96.

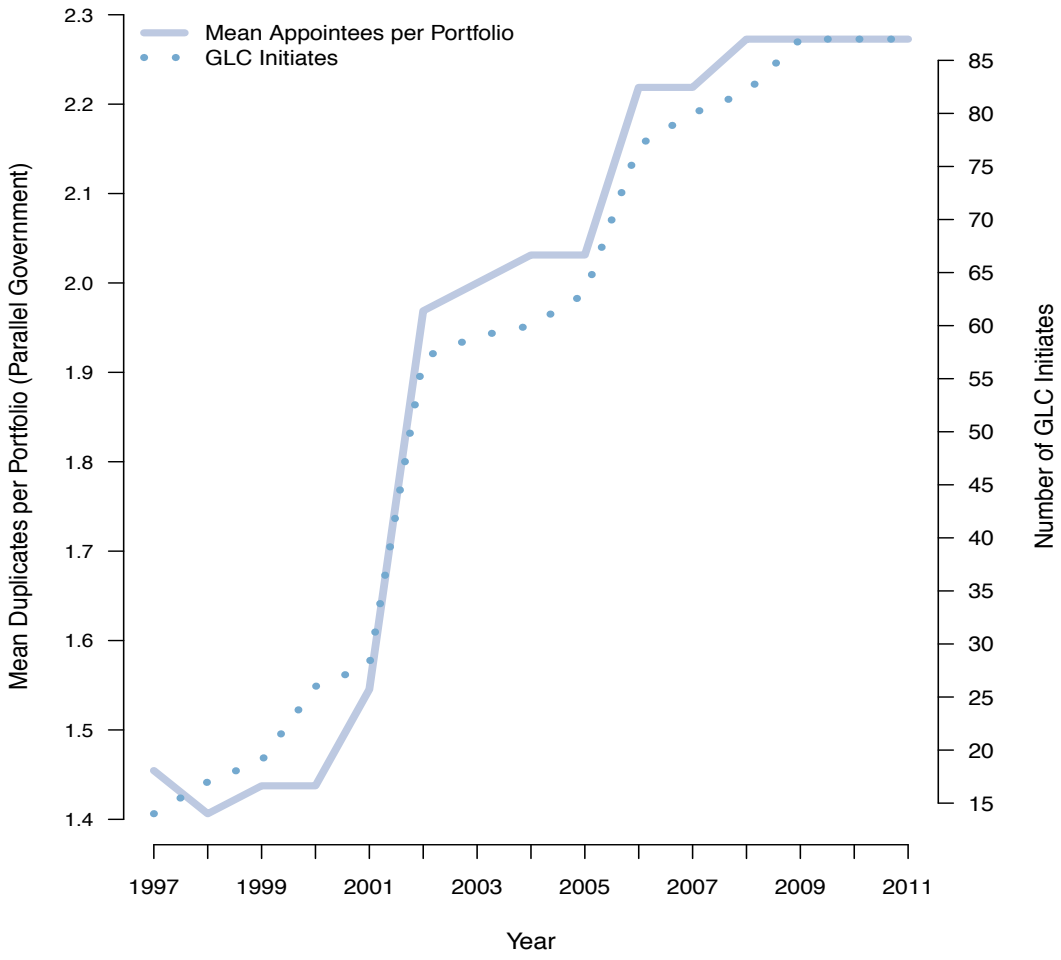

Figure 5.12: The left *y*-axis records the mean size of Sassou Nguesso's parallel government apparatus per regime portfolio. The right *y*-axis records the number of GLC initiates.

5.3.2 GLC Membership and Elite Behavior

Virtually all *Brazzavillois* acknowledge that, by 2005, Sassou Nguesso's position was stronger than ever. He had consolidated a geographic in-group, implemented an expansive parallel government apparatus, and expanded his GLC far beyond his inner circle. He had also siphoned a fortune from the state treasury.

The quantitative evidence affirms his increasingly dominant position. Figure 5.13 records Sassou Nguesso's foreign travel since seizing power in October 1997. Indeed, foreign trips are precisely when autocrats are most vulnerable to conspirators. With the seat of power essentially vacant, conspirators have only to seize the state media apparatus, airport, and a handful of locations in the capital. This is a truism among Africa's autocrats:

> Mobutu knows coups coups often occur when African heads of states are abroad, and prudence is thus the order of the day [159].

Since foreign travel requires advance planning, for each month I record the number of days Sassou Nguesso spends outside Congo during the subsequent three months, yielding an approximation of Sassou Nguesso's subjective security evaluation at monthly intervals. The great turning point for Sassou Nguesso appears to be in 2004 or 2005, when he began campaigning for the presidency of the African Union. Sassou Nguesso styled himself an elder statesman, immersing himself in the Sudan and Cote d'Ivoire crises and representing Africa at summits around the world. And rather than taking his annual August vacation in his native village of Oyo, he henceforth preferred Marbella, Spain, a haven for the global super rich.

As Figure 5.12 makes clear, Sassou Nguesso's ascension coincides with the expansion of *both* his parallel government and the GLC. Chapter 4 suggested that the parallel government itself fosters elite competition; it relied on case studies to do so, since there is no a valid measure of elite "effort" across portfolios. The theory in Section 5.2 suggests that the GLC should have also contributed to Sassou Nguesso's security by reducing anti-regime activity among initiates. GLC membership itself, the theory suggests, should cause elites to engage in less anti-regime activity than their counterparts.

Measuring the causal effect of GLC membership on elite behavior is difficult, for initiates are systematically different than their counterparts. This, of course, is by design, as Section 5.1.4 made clear. Sassou Nguesso extends GLC membership strategically, reserves the most critical portfolios for

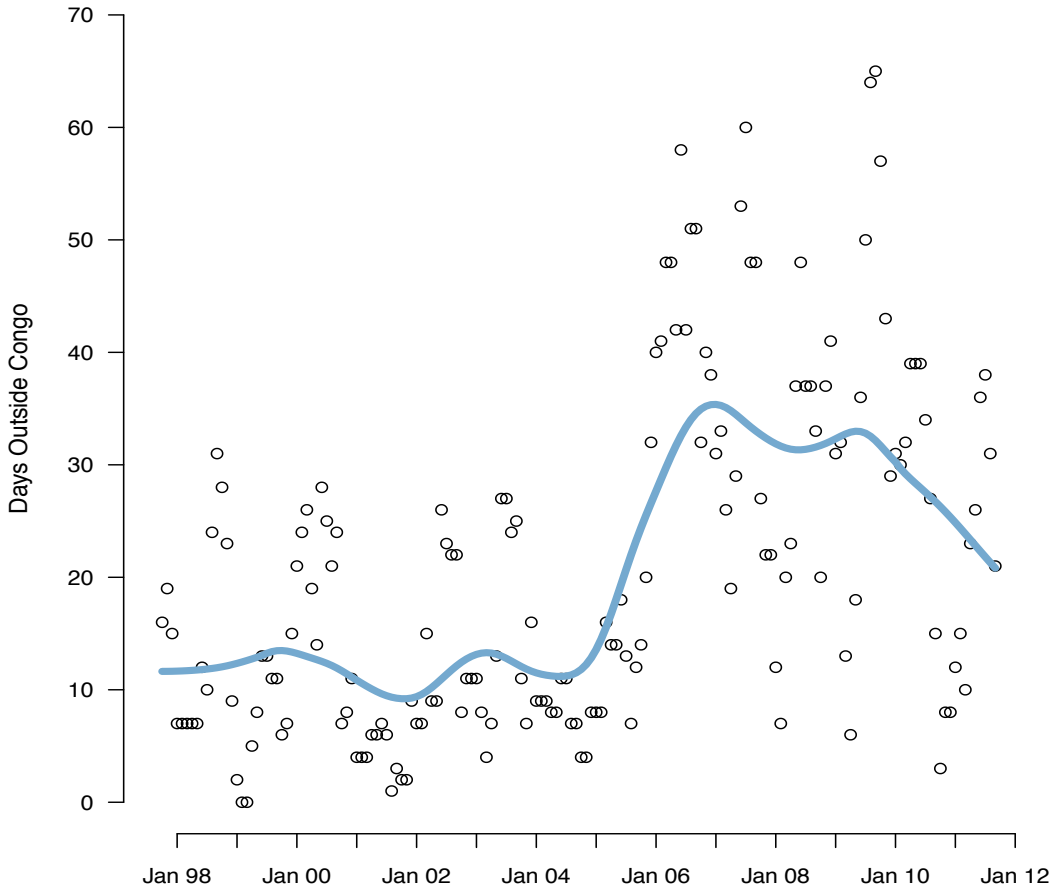

Figure 5.13: Sassou Nguesso's foreign travel since 1997. The left y-axis records the number of days per moving three month period that Sassou Nguesso spent outside Congo. The bolded line is smoothing parameter to elucidate the trend.

his high level appointees, and restricts membership tightly. I employ two identification strategies. First, I employ a fixed effects estimator to assess the effect of GLC membership on "within-elite" behavior over time. Using the measure of anti-regime activity introduced in Chapter 3, I estimate the probability that elite i challenges Sassou Nguesso in year t as a function of membership in the GLC, as well as elite and year fixed effects to accommodate any unobserved characteristics. In so doing, I exploit the significant public records that many elites accumulated prior to initiation. Because this

approach considers only temporal variation in elite behavior, it controls for unobserved loyalty or disloyalty to Sassou Nguesso. I also include a range of other time variant control variables.

Second, I employ a propensity score matching estimator that uses the results from Proposition 3 and the statistical results from Table 5.1 to explicitly model the treatment assignment mechanism. By computing the probability of treatment – that is, the probability that elite *i* is a GLC member in year *t* – I generate a propensity score for each elite *i* in each year *t*. I then prune the dataset to create groups of initiates and non-initiates – treatment and control groups, in the lexicon of causal inference – that are similar in all respects save GLC membership.[22] The result is treatment and control groups that have essentially identical probabilities of having joined the GLC. Finally, I estimate the probability that elite *i* engages in anti-regime activity in year *t* as a function of GLC membership. Whereas the fixed effects approach focuses on the change in elite behavior before and after GLC initiation, this approach exploits the fact that Sassou Nguesso limits membership sharply. Put otherwise, there are more elites whose demographic and professional backgrounds render them eligible for high level appointment and GLC membership. And Sassou Nguesso, because he limits membership so sharply, simply cannot accommodate them all.

Table 5.2 presents descriptive statistics for the treatment and control groups, both prior to and following the matching algorithm. Although the matching algorithm reduces the dataset to just under 1, 200 observations – representing nearly 200 members of the elite – it creates treatment and control groups that are essentially identical in all respects save treatment status. GLC initiates and non-initiates, in this matched dataset, are equally likely to be members of Sassou Nguesso's family, his concubine, his Mbochi ethnic group, the PCT, and his civil war effort. The treatment and control groups draw equally from the regime's highest ranking positions, and are comprised of elites whose birth villages are equidistant from Oyo.

[22] To be clear, I pool the data when creating treatment and control groups: I include elite *i*'s pre-initiation observations as part of his potential control group.

Table 5.2: Balance Improvement for Matched Data

	Means Treated All Data	Means Control All Data	Means Treated Matched Data	Means Control Matched Data
Distance	0.525	0.080	0.525	0.526
High Level Appointment	1.260	0.108	1.260	1.263
Civil War Post	0.395	0.036	0.395	0.395
Family	0.126	0.016	0.126	0.126
Concubine	0.036	0.009	0.036	0.036
PCT or Allied Party	1.000	0.466	1.000	1.000
Oyo Distance	155.5212	196.2222	155.5212	155.7885
Mbochi	0.2509	0.0844	0.2509	0.2509

The results appear in Table 5.3 and are visualized in Figure 5.14. They yield the same conclusion: GLC membership *causes* elites to engage in less anti-regime behavior than they would otherwise. The fixed effects models in columns 1 and 2 are identical save for the inclusion of a control for the relevance of elite *i*'s portfolio to regime survival. The theory in Section 5.2 suggests that including this variable induces post-treatment bias. Since the regime's most sensitive portfolios are entrusted to GLC initiates – who, by virtue of initiation, have provided a costly signal of their loyalty to Sassou Nguesso – Model 2 likely attributes part of the causal effect of GLC initiation to receiving a high level portfolio. Still, Model 2 provides a robustness check for the results in Model 1, for it makes clear that GLC initiates refrain from anti-regime behavior not because they gain more from the regime, but because membership makes anti-regime activity so costly.

In both fixed effects and matching models GLC membership causes a significant change in elite behavior. Congolese elites who are excluded from the GLC, Figure 5.14 suggests, engage in anti-regime activity with probability between roughly 12% and 18% per year. GLC membership reduces these probabilities to just under 4%. This effect may seem relatively small. It is, however, practically very significant. For the regime's most important positions are extremely lucrative, and their occupants quickly join the ranks of the global rich, and perhaps even the super rich. They own luxury

Table 5.3: The Effect of GLC Membership on Elite Behavior

	Anti-Regime Activity Logit Model 1	Anti-Regime Activity Logit Model 2	Anti-Regime Activity Matching Model 3
GLC	-1.889**	-0.9285†	-1.7989**
	(0.5451)	(0.5871)	(0.2968)
High Level Post$_1$		0.4978	
		(0.4781)	
High Level Post$_2$		2.170**	
		(0.6896)	
Family	-0.5760	-1.058	
	(1829.0)	(18310.0)	
Concubine	-0.1232	-0.9089	
	(8954.0)	(8975.0)	
Pct & Allied Party	-7.087**	-7.176**	
	(0.4386)	(0.4727)	
Party Leader	3.186**	3.119**	
	(0.4248)	(0.4168)	
National Assembly	0.7716†	1.051*	
	(0.4031)	(0.4262)	
Elite Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	No
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	6575	5664	1176
Significance levels:	†† : 15% † : 10%	* : 5%	** : 1%

apartments across Paris, mostly in the affluent 8th and 16th *arrondissements* and, in one case, on the Île de la Cité; they construct enormous villas throughout Congo; and their access to state revenue and enforcement mechanisms enables them to create relatively durable business interests. Sassou Nguesso, of course, possesses sole authority to appoint and remove office holders. That any of them are willing to challenge him is, therefore, quite surprising itself. A 7% reduction, in this context, is thus significant indeed.

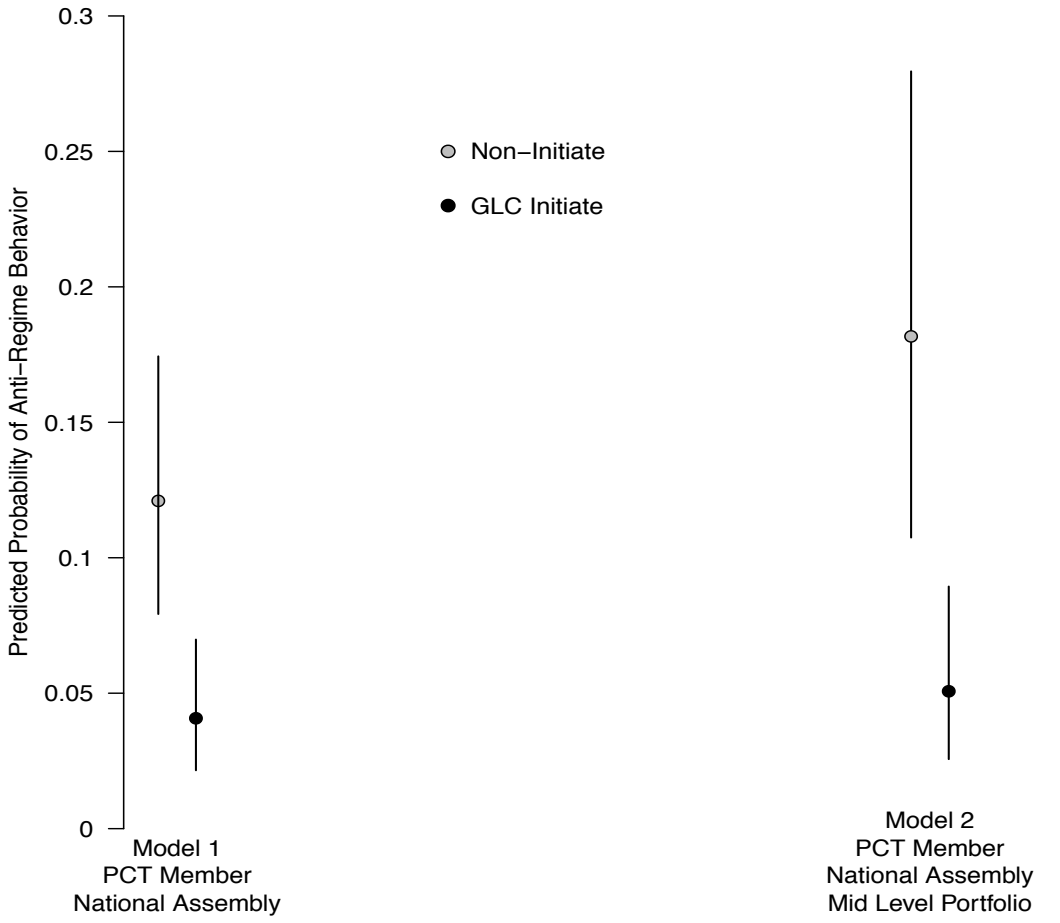

Figure 5.14: The predicted probabilities that initiates and non-initiates challenge Sassou Nguesso in year *t*. The predicted probabilities are based on the results from Models 1 and 2 in Table 5.3.

5.4 Conclusion

Students of autocratic politics have long maintained that elites must be divided. They must not form the dense social ties that foster trust and ultimately anti-regime conspiracies. Sassou Nguesso, this chapter finds, does precisely the opposite. With an inner circle of family and longtime aides – whose loyalties were tested during National Conference of 1991 and the civil war of 1997 – Sassou

Nguesso created the *Grande Loge du Congo* during his Paris exile. He used their loyalty as an asset. By forcing new, untested appointees to interact with them as often as possible, he created a monitoring device, which enabled his inner circle to detect nascent conspiracies from within the social institution. Deterred, GLC initiates engaged in far less anti-regime activity than their non-initiated counterparts, for they *believed* malfeasance would be detected. More, this monitoring device doubled as a screening device. It enabled Sassou Nguesso to ascertain which elites resisted more intense scrutiny, and hence redouble it. By 2005, Section 5.1 made clear, virtually all of the regime's highest level appointees were either drawn from the GLC or forced to join. Those who resisted were occasionally targeted for assassination.

The parallel government documented in Chapter 4 and the social institution described above are the pillars of Sassou Nguesso's monitoring apparatus. Together, they rendered arbitrary elite purges far less likely. Chapter 6 explains why.

6

To Shuffle or Not to Shuffle, 2004-2005

That which especially incites to obedience is the praising and honoring of the one who obeys and the dishonoring and punishment of the one who disobeys.

– Xenophon, *The Education of Cyrus*

August 15, 2004, marked the 44th anniversary of Congo's independence from France. To "cele-

brate," a group named *Les Denisiens* published an essay that detailed Sassou Nguesso's business interests and real estate holdings in Congo, all acquired since October 1997. The list featured some 64 assets, and copies were delivered by courier to Brazzaville's embassies. The list leaves the distinct impression that Sassou Nguesso owns virtually all of Congo. It includes 16 of the most prominent office buildings in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire; eight construction companies that specialize in roads, airports, and residential lodgings; six shipping companies, which collectively cover air, land, and sea; seven food production firms, which including such necessities as bottled water, juice, soft drinks, manioc, slaughterhouses, sugar, and cold storage; two telecommunications firms; 60% of the capital of *all* banks privatized since 1997; an insurance company; a security services company; three timber companies; a diamond marketing company, owned with Jean-Pierre Bemba, a former vice president of the DRC who was arrested by the International Criminal Court in May 2008 for crimes against humanity; and Congo's two most luxurious hotels, where rooms cost between $200 and $2, 000 per night.[1] *Les Denisiens* released a second report in October, a "Pointe-Noire special," which revealed the family's "principal locations of financial liquidity," and promised a final report by Christmas, which would detail the family's financial interests abroad.

The list sent shockwaves through the country. *La Lettre du Continent*, whose reporter was brother to a high ranking ministerial counselor, reported that *Les Denisiens* had "rendered the President and his closest aides crazy" and "paranoid.[2] Indeed, the the list was so detailed that it could have only been the work of insiders. Its publication was also timed to generate real consequences. In December 2004 Congo was scheduled to sign a series of documents with the Paris Club that marked the penultimate phase of its debt relief application. Once signed, the Paris Club would restructure Congo's external debt from $9.2 billion to $5.2 billion [5]. With the country's private creditors pouring even more money into trials in New York and London, *Les Denisiens* represented

[1] These are the Atlantic Palace in Pointe-Noire and Olympic Palace in Brazzaville. The list also included three other mid-range hotels. I will publish the list on my website once the dissertation is published.

[2] *La Lettre du Continent*, 25 November 2004.

perhaps the most threatening challenge to Sassou Nguesso's domestic standing since his 1997 return.

Sassou Nguesso shuffles his ministers roughly every two years. And with the last in August 2002, just after the electoral season, Congo's political class awaited the new government. These shuffles are the clearest, most relentlessly public mark of Sassou Nguesso's favor. Retained and newly appointed ministers are virtual celebrities, patriarchs of their home villages and poised to bolster their family's patrimony – typically in France – by siphoning from ministerial budgets. Disgraced ministers become pariahs. They are unlikely to reenter a future government and, having joined Sassou Nguesso once, lack public credibility as potential opposition leaders, as Chapter 7 makes clear. Even their social status is damaged. As ministers they were treated with deference by their neighbors in exchange for financial gifts. Out of government, their favor is inconsequential.[3] These shuffles are also, according to many scholars, the chief mechanism by which autocrats control their elite. For frequent, arbitrary shuffles remind appointees that they are dispensable; their tenure rests only on the autocrat's favor [176]. Moreover, frequent shuffles limit the amount of state resources that appointees can siphon, and hence autocrats shuffle them to keep their appointees weak and unthreatening [92, 179, 53, 27, 28, 65]. How, then, would Sassou Nguesso respond to the massive security breach – the massive betrayal – of *Les Denisiens*, all of whom remained unknown?

Sassou Nguesso announced his new government on January 7, 2005. Gone was Jean Dello, a senior aide to Jean Pierre Thystère-Tchicaya, who served as Minister of Telecommunications since 1997. Dello's initial appointment served to consolidate Sassou Nguesso's electoral alliance with Thystère-Tchicaya; and as Chapter 7 details, with Thystère-Tchicaya thoroughly discredited among his Pointe-Noire constituents, both the alliance and Dello himself were no longer useful. Simon Mfoutou and Alain Moka were also dismissed after two years of service. Like Dello, both occupied relatively inconsequential posts as well: Comptroller General and Minister of Health, respectively. The highest profile departure was Roger Rigobert Andèly, Minister of Finance since 2002. A native

[3]Interview with Romain Oba, advisor to the Minister of Defense, 18 July 2010.

of Boundji, Andèly served as a Vice Governor of the Bank of Central African States (BEAC), the region's central bank. His removal was so stunning, in part, because he oversaw the signature of the debt relief documents, despite the *Les Denisiens* revelations. Indeed, he was among the few government ministers that the Paris Club viewed as credible.[4] His great error was demanding more transparency from Bruno Itoua's SNPC [173]. Reflecting his reputation, Andèly purchased a townhouse in Rockville, Maryland, for $610, 000 in June 2005, a neighborhood where the median income is less than $50, 000. It remains extremely modest for the regime's standards.[5]

These dismissals, however, were exceptions. Of 34 ministers, Sassou Nguesso reappointed 30. Jean Martin Mbemba, who presided over the show trial for the 355 young men massacred at the Beach in 1999, was reappointed, as was Jean-Baptiste Tati-Loutard, whose *Mouvement d'Action et Renouveau* political party was financed by First Lady Antoinette to further undermine Thystère-Tchicaya in Pointe-Noire. Henri Djombo, Gilbert Ondongo, Isidore Mvouba, Henri Ossèbi, Alain Akouala Atipault, Florent Ntsiba, Claude Alphonse Nsilou, and Rodolphe Adada were all reappointed, and would all serve through this writing; Pierre Moussa was reappointed, and would serve until his 2012 retirement. Six other ministers who were terminated several years later were promptly given National Assembly seats, all with the PCT. Even Sassou Nguesso's personal staff remained unchanged. Uncle Aimé Emmanuel Yoka had served as his chief of staff since 2002 and ambassador to Morocco before that; he was named Minister of Justice in 2007, where he remains. Anatole Collinet Makosso, chief of staff to First Lady Antoinette, as he had since 1997. Makosso also presides over Congo's second university, which conspicuously offers courses in international politics but neither domestic politics nor democratic theory. Reflecting Sassou Nguesso's preference for the wives and mistresses of his political enemies – see Chapter 3 – he also retained Adélaïde Mougany and Emilienne Raoul.[6]

[4] Interview with Oscar Melhado, 5 December 2011.

[5] See `http://dc.blockshopper.com/property/4-292-03397147/1658_piccard_drive/`.

[6] Adélaïde Mougany was married to Ange Diawara until his execution in 1973 for preparing a *coup d'état*

These reappointments were thoroughly unsurprising to Congolese citizens. Sassou Nguesso's governments have been remarkably stable since his 1997 return. Figure 6.1 displays reappointment rates for each of Sassou Nguesso's ministerial shuffles. Of the 33 ministers appointed in October 1997, some 88% were reappointed in the government shuffle of January 1999. The next shuffle occurred in August 2002, when only 48% of ministers from the January 1999 government were retained. Since then, ministerial reappointment rates have oscillated between 69% and 97%, with a mean reappointment rate of more than 80%. "One doesn't change a team that wins," explains *Les Dêpèches de Brazzaville*, Sassou Nguesso's chief propaganda outlet and Brazzaville's only daily newspaper. Perhaps, but virtually all *Brazzavillois* instead view the reappointment rate more cynically. "It's a government of loyalty," one opposition activist observed, "from which is asked nothing more than allegiance to the hand of its creator."[7] Sassou Nguesso, they say, is committed to rewarding personal loyalty.

This trend is apparent across the regime. Figure 6.4 visualizes tenure spells for each of the 508 appointees to nearly 600 government portfolios recorded in the dataset of politics elites. For each elite, I record the number of consecutive years during which he or she occupied a political appointment. I refer to these consecutive year periods as tenure spells, and I accommodate the possibility that an elite may enjoy multiple tenure spells over his career. I then record the most sensitive government portfolio that the elite attained during a tenure spell, using the coding rules from Chapters 3 through 5. Elites who attained the most sensitive portfolios – military leaders, SNPC executives, Ministers of Defense and Finance, among others – enjoy remarkably long tenures. Indeed, many of Sassou Nguesso's high level appointees have served continuously since his 1997 return. Sassou

against the northern government; Sassou Nguesso, as Minister of Defense, was instrumental in ordering the execution. Mougany later married General Benoît Moundélé Ngollo, an Oyo native and Sassou Nguesso ally until roughly 1999. Emilienne Raoul was married to General Alfred Raoul during his brief service as President Marien Ngouabi's Prime Minister between 1968 and 1969. Suspected of participating in Ange Diawara's aborted *coup d'état*, Raoul was sentenced to 20 years in prison; though released after six months, he remained ostracized.

[7] Interview with Patrick Eric Mampouya, 22 December 2012.

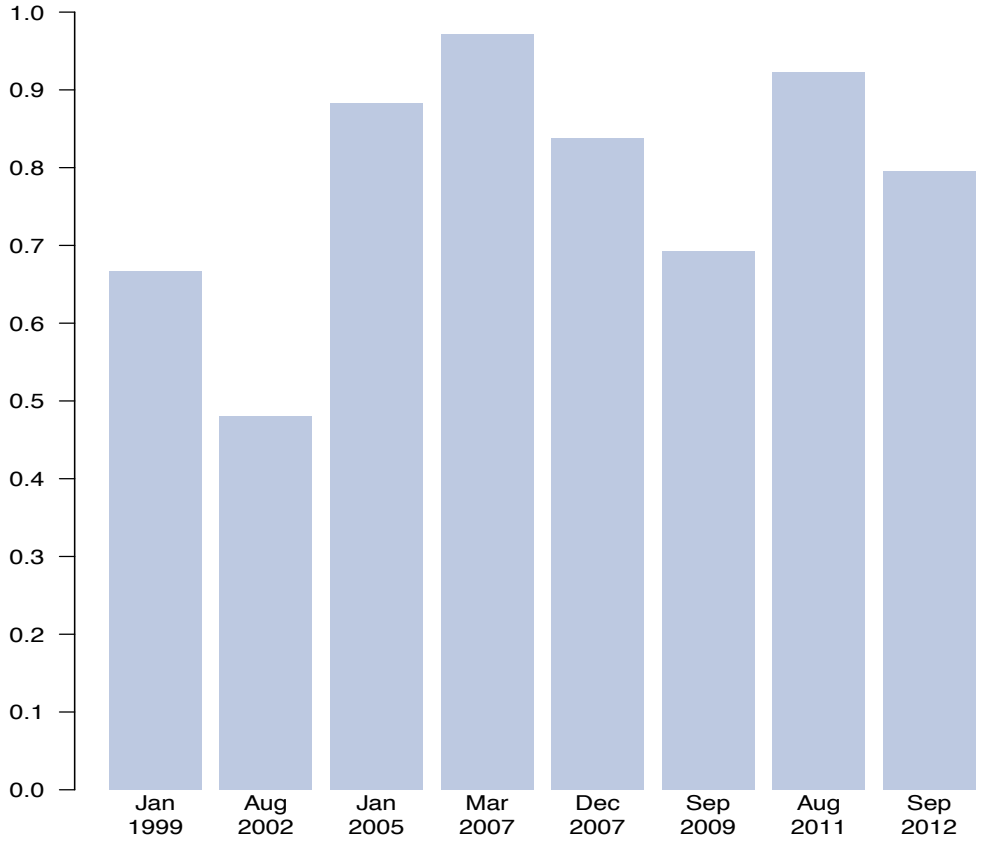

Figure 6.1: Reappointment rates for each of Sassou Nguesso's ministerial shuffles since reclaiming power in October 1997.

Nguesso's least sensitive appointments – the 44 regular members of the Human Rights Commission or the 75 regular members of the Economic and Social Council, all virtually unknown to most *Brazzavillois* – often serve for between three and 10 years. Sassou Nguesso's mid-level appointments – his less important ministerial portfolios, such as health and education, and leaders of Congo's constitutional institutions – display similar levels of variation.

Every autocrat must decide how long to retain the services of his military and ministerial elite. And as students of autocratic politics observe, Sassou Nguesso's counterparts resolve this problem

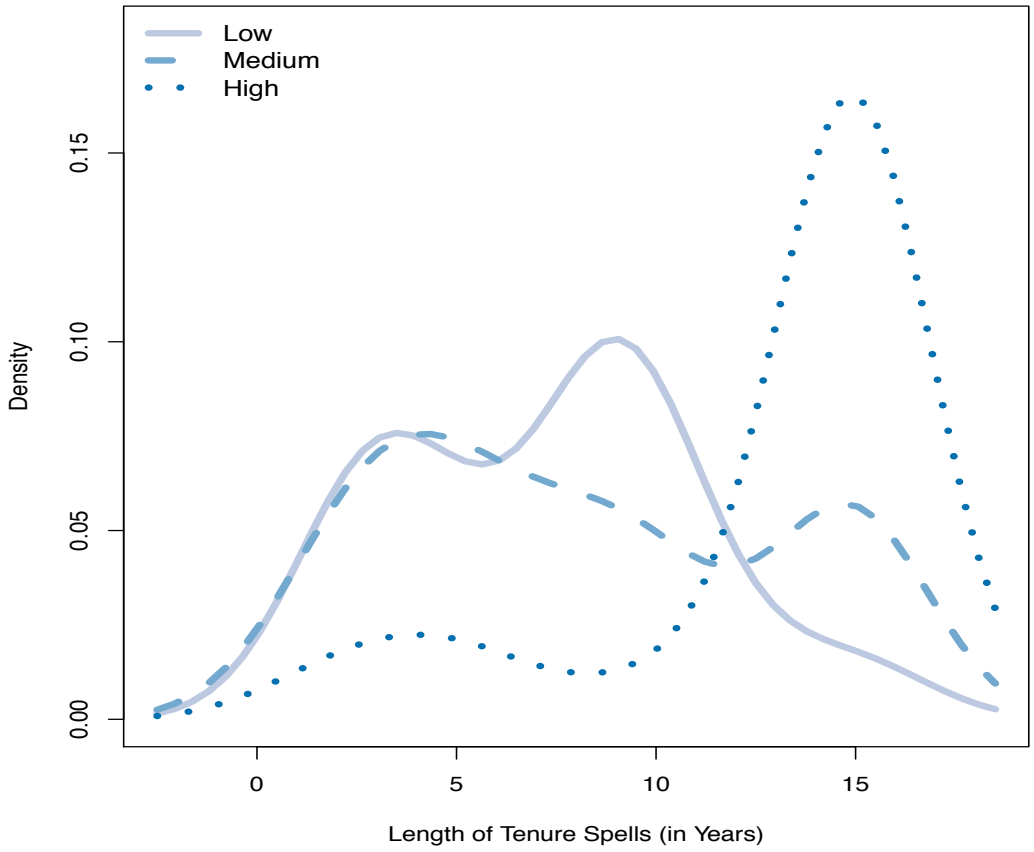

Figure 6.2: Distribution of tenure lengths by the sensitivity of portfolios to the regime's security.

much differently. Rafael Trujillo, who ruled the Dominican Republic for some 31 years, shuffled his elite frequently and arbitrarily:

> Trujillo's associates never knew when a sudden change would undercut their very existence. ...Very numerous were the Deputies and the Senators whose undated resignations, signed in blank upon their assumption of office, were delivered to Congress while the man concerned was in the middle of his daily duties, or even speaking on the floor of the chamber[52].

Mobutu Sese Seko, who ruled Zaire for 32 years, did the same:

> Client office holders have been constantly reminded of the precariousness of tenure by the frequency of office rotation .... The MPR Political Bureau, for example, was revamped a dozen times in the first decade of party life. No one has been continuously a member, and only six persons have figured on as many as half of the membership lists .... [180]

"Time in power," according to *The Economist*, "allows [ministers] to develop their own political base which, if left unchecked, could give them the means to launch a coup."[8] Leaving appointees in office, the conventional wisdom goes, is dangerous. Finance ministers enjoy privileged access to state revenue, which can be used to rival patronage networks; military officers cultivate their soldiers' loyalties and enjoy privileged access to arms.

By 2005, Ambassador Roger Meece wrote, Sassou Nguesso had "emerged as the uncontested and unquestioned leader of government."[9] As virtually all *Brazzavillois* acknowledge, he can appoint and terminate at will. Why, then, has Sassou Nguesso consistently reappointed his senior civilian and military leaders, even at the risk of rival power centers? This chapter's central argument is that Sassou Nguesso eschews frequently elite shuffles largely as a result of the recruitment and monitoring techniques detailed in Chapters 3 through 5. Section 6.1 explores the elite shuffle with the aid of a game theoretic model. Although shorter tenures prevent elites from accumulating resources that potentially challenge the autocrat, the model suggests that frequent and arbitrary shuffling severs the link between performance and reward. Elites understand that, regardless of their performance, the autocrat may terminate them.

The model yields two central results. First, shuffling is a mark of weakness, not strength. Al-

[8] See `http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2014/07/economist-explains-9`.

[9] See Meece's cable of 22 August 2005, published on Wikileaks.

though shuffling may reduce the probability of elite conspiracies, it does so at the cost of a less efficient state apparatus. For the shuffling equilibrium is both damaging and intractable for autocrats. Since elites expect to be shuffled, they allocate less effort to coalition responsibilities, and the autocrat is more likely to terminate them for cause. As a result, autocrats employ the elite shuffle only if they lack more efficient monitoring devices. Second, in the presence of a robust monitoring apparatus, occupants of high level portfolios enjoy longer tenures than their low level counterparts. For since they contribute more to regime survival, the autocrat fosters a particularly strong link between loyalty and reward. Section 6.2 employs the model to illuminate Sassou Nguesso's tenure policy and the behavior of his appointees. In particular, it identifies a "punishment regime," the implementation of which differs across regime portfolios. It suggests that Sassou Nguesso employs tenure predictability as an instrument to incentivize loyalty rather than punish preemptively, before evidence of malfeasance exists. After all, as Chapters 4 and 5 made clear, he employs a range of monitoring techniques to ascertain when punishment is justified.

6.1 A Theory of Coalition Tenure

6.1.1 Environment

The model below builds on those in Chapters 3 through 5. As before, consider a society comprised of an autocrat D, a challenger $-D$, and a set of appointees of size γ, who are drawn from the in-group of size n; the appointees are indexed by j. The autocrat possesses some amount of coalition power $\vartheta_D \in (0, 1)$, which is common knowledge among elites. Again, ϑ_D captures the probability that the autocrat is able to survive any anti-regime activity in which elite i engages. When the game begins, the autocrat sets amount b^D of state revenue R to share with his γ appointees, while the challenger offers to share amount b^{-D} if he assumes power.

As in Chapter 5, elites are differentiated by their preference for the challenger ε_j. The autocrat

does not observe ε_j. Rather, he know only its distribution across the elite population:

$$\varepsilon_j \sim \text{Unif}\left[-\frac{n}{2\varphi}, \frac{n}{2\varphi}\right] \tag{6.1}$$

where $\varphi \geq 1$ reflects the autocrat's beliefs about the distribution of ε_j. As $\varphi \to 1$ the autocrat views his elite as more heterogeneous, with some very loyal and others much less so. These assumptions correspond to our intuitions about life as an autocrat. His elite stands to gain something from removing him, but the autocrat does not know precisely how much. He cannot simply "buy off" his elite.

Whereas in previous chapters the autocrat played a one-shot game, I now assume that, when dividing state resources at the outset, the autocrat can choose whether to retain his elites into period $t = 2$ or to replace them. Elite j now gains utility

$$u_{j1}(\cdot) = \frac{b_1^D}{n} - c\left(e_j\right) + \beta\left[\Pr_i\left(C_{j2} = 1\right) \times u_{j2}\left(C_{j2} = 1\right)\right]$$

where $\beta \in [0, 1)$ gives elite i's discount rate, $c\left(e_j\right) = \frac{e_j^2}{2}$ gives elite j's cost of effort, $\Pr_j\left(C_{j2} = 1\right)$ gives elite j's probability of retention into period 2, and $u_{j2}\left(C_{j2} = 1\right)$ gives elite j's utility from inclusion in the period 2 government.

Elite j's assessment of whether the autocrat retains him into period 2 is based on two factors. First, elite j may be reappointed if his committed effort level e_j is greater than some threshold e^D required by the autocrat. Since the autocrat's monitoring technologies are imperfect, I assume he observes elite j's true effort level e_j and some random noise α, distributed according to

$$\alpha \sim \text{Unif}\left[-\frac{1}{2\psi}, \frac{1}{2\psi}\right] \tag{6.2}$$

The parameter $\psi \geq 1$ measures the quality of the autocrat's monitoring technology. As ψ gets large,

the autocrat can discern elite j's true effort level with near certainty; as ψ goes to 1, by contrast, the autocrat is virtually unable to discern whether elite j's effort level satisfied his criteria for merit based reappointment. Second, even if elite j sets e_{j1} above the threshold required for merit-based retention, the autocrat may engineer an "elite shuffle," which removes proportion $1 - p$ of elites from the governing coalition. Hence the probability that elite j is reappointed for period 2 is:

$$\begin{aligned} \Pr\left(C_{j2} = 1\right) &= p \times \Pr\left(e_{j1} + \alpha \geq e^{D}\right) \\ &= p \int_{e^{D} - e_{j1}}^{\frac{1}{2}} d\alpha \end{aligned}$$

Alternatively, elite j may opt to support the challenger $-D$'s bid for power by engaging in anti-regime activity. In particular, elite j engages in anti-regime activity if his utility from doing so exceeds that from supporting the incumbent autocrat:

$$\frac{b_1^{D}}{n} - c\left(e_j\right) + \beta\left[\Pr_j\left(C_{j2} = 1\right) \times u_{j2}\left(C_{j2} = 1\right)\right] \quad < \quad \left(1 - \vartheta_{D}\right)\frac{b^{-D}}{n} - c\left(e_j\right) + \alpha_j$$

where $1 - \vartheta_D$ gives the probability that elite j's efforts result in a *coup d'état*. As before, this is my interpretation of "divide and rule" politics. Although many elites may engage in anti-regime activity, their efforts are uncoordinated, for communication is made difficult by the widespread suspicion that characterizes life in autocracies. Hence from elite j's perspective, the probability that his anti-regime activities yield a successful coup is simply whatever coalition power the autocrat is unable to command $1 - \vartheta_D$. The probability of a coup from the autocrat's perspective is simply the proportion of elites who engage in anti-regime activity:

$$\begin{aligned} \Pr_{D}\left(\text{Coup}\right) &= \frac{1}{n} N(\text{Anti-Regime Activity}) \\ &= \frac{1}{n} \int_{\frac{b^{D}}{n} - (1 - \quad_{D})\frac{b^{-D}}{n}}^{\frac{1}{2}} \alpha dj \end{aligned}$$

The autocrat can manipulate the term his survival parameter ϑ_D in two ways. First, I assume that the autocrat's survival parameter is increasing in elite effort allocation e_j:

$$\frac{\partial \vartheta_D}{\partial e_j} > 0$$

That is, the autocrat is less vulnerable to *coups d'état* when his elite discharge their coalition responsibilities effectively. For instance, just as the autocrat relies on elites to effort to increase state revenue, so too may he rely on senior military officers to steel the regime against popular unrest; if elite appointees in the security services shirk from their responsibilities, the intelligence apparatus may fail to detect a nascent elite conspiracy. Second, as students of autocratic politics have long argued, I assume that the autocrat's survival parameter is decreasing in the proportion of elites not shuffled p:

$$\frac{\partial \vartheta_D}{\partial p} < 0$$

Predictable tenure policies, as scholars have long insisted, may also have drawbacks for the autocrat. They may enable elites to accumulate resources that could potentially threaten the autocrat; likewise, strong elite social networks may foster elite trust. Intuitively, by shuffling his elites in and out of government, the autocrat impedes the sort of communication among elites that could potentially threaten his hold on power.

The autocrat's utility depends on whether he remains in power for period 2:

$$u_D = \begin{cases} R - b & \text{if the autocrat retains power} \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

In short, the autocrat sets his tenure policy – that is, the proportion of elites p he shuffles arbitrarily – to balance his interest in incentivizing elite effort and retaining power into period 2.

The timing of the game is visualized in Figure 6.3.

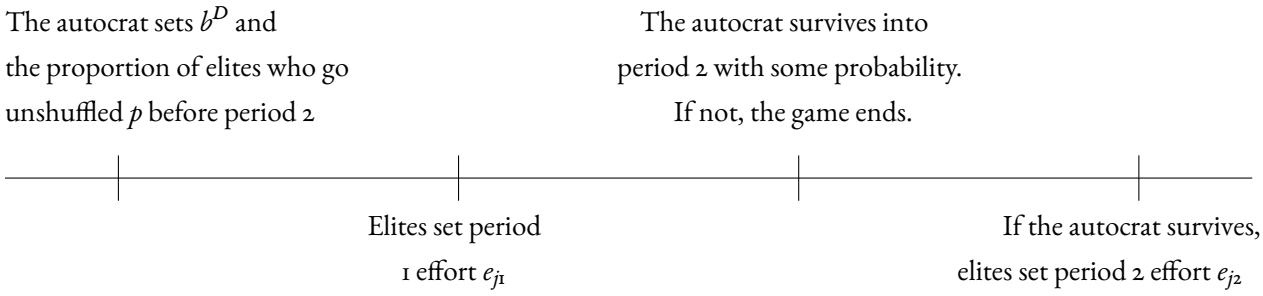

Figure 6.3: Timing of the shuffling game.

6.1.2 Results

Lemmas 3 and 4 define elite *j*'s optimal effort allocations in periods 1 and 2.

Lemma 3 (Period 2 Effort). *When deciding whether to support the autocrat D, elite j computes his period 2 utility as*

$$u_{j2}^{*}\left(C_{j2}=1\right) \quad = \quad \frac{b_{2}^{D*}}{n}-c\left(\underline{e}^{*}\right)$$

Lemma 4 (Period 1 Effort). *The probability that elite j's period $t = 1$ effort allocation satisfies the autocrat's threshold is*

$$Pr\left(e_{j1}+\alpha>e^{D}\right) \quad = \quad \frac{1}{2}+\Downarrow\left(e_{j1}-e^{D}\right)$$

Elite j's optimal effort allocation in period 1 is thus

$$e_{j1}^{*}(p) \quad = \quad \beta p \psi u_{j2}^{*}\left(C_j = 1\right)$$

Lemma 4 yields two important insights about tenure. First, the promise of tenure security into period $t = 2$ incentivizes elite j to allocate more effort to his coalition responsibilities. As $p \to 1$, elite j knows the autocrat will reward loyalty in period 1 with retention in period 2. And as a result, elite j allocates more effort to his period 1 responsibilities. Second, the autocrat's monitoring technology ψ captures the extent to which the autocrat can discern whether e_{j1} satisfies the minimum effort threshold e^{D} required for reappointment.

Using Lemmas 3 and 4, Proposition 4 establishes the autocrat's optimal level of shuffling.

Proposition 4. *The autocrat's optimal rate of shuffling is given by*

$$p^{*} = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } 2\left(\beta\eta u_{j2}^{*}\right)^{2} - \frac{\partial^{2} b^{-D}(1-\quad D)}{\partial p^{2}} < 0 \\ \frac{\left[\frac{1}{2} - \quad u_{j2}^{*}\left(e^{D} + \frac{\partial b^{-D}(1-\quad D)}{\partial e}\right)\right]}{\frac{\partial b^{-D}(1-\quad D)}{\partial p} - 2\left(\quad u_{j2}^{*}\right)^{2}} & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

The autocrat shares amount of state revenue

$$b^{D*} \quad = \quad \frac{R - \frac{n^{2}}{2}}{1 + \vartheta_D} - \frac{\beta p^{*}\left[Pr\left(e_{j1}^{*} > e^{D}\right)\right] u_{j2}^{*}}{\left(3 - \vartheta_D\right)\left(1 + \vartheta_D\right)}$$

with his elite. Assume the autocrat's rival $-D$ plays a one period game. Then he can only commit to offering amount

$$b^{-D*} \quad = \quad \frac{R - \frac{n^{2}}{2}}{1 + \vartheta_D}$$

The number of elites who engage in anti-regime activity is

$$N^{*}\left(\textit{Anti-Regime Activity}\right) \quad = \quad \frac{n}{2} - \frac{\varphi b^{D*}\vartheta}{n}$$

For the autocrat to employ a tenure policy that is even mildly arbitrary, Proposition 4 makes clear, tenure predictability must seriously threaten the autocrat's survival into period 2. Elites who earn reappointment must somehow develop trust networks and resource endowments outside the autocrat's control, which ultimately threaten his hold on power. These threats, moreover, must outweigh the positive effects on survival induced by the efforts of military and intelligence officers to steel the regime against popular unrest and elite conspiracies. If this condition is not satisfied, the autocrat will set $p^{*} = 1$, and elite reappointment will be based solely on performance.

Proposition 4 makes equally clear that the autocrat's monitoring technologies, represented by ψ, are a critical determinant of his tenure policy. As the autocrat's capacity to ascertain elite effort increases ψ, so too does his ability to incentivize elite loyalty and competence with the promise of reappointment. Elite effort thus rises twofold: both because elites know the autocrat can reward their loyalty, and because they know he is committed to doing so. From the expression for b^{D*}, moreover, the autocrat's ability to condition reappointment on faithful service enables him to reduce his financial allocation b^{D*}. Tenure security, then, has a range of benefits for the autocrat.

The effects of weak monitoring technologies are as insidious as the benefits are great. As ψ falls, from Lemma 4, elites invest less effort in their governing responsibilities. Since this reduces ϑ, the autocrat is weaker, and more vulnerable to *coups d'état*. Since elite *j*'s effort allocation is more likely to fall below e^{D}, he is also more likely to punish elite *j* for cause. In essence, arbitrary shuffling is optimal only for autocrats who are vulnerable anyway, and then fosters an equilibrium in which the autocrat remains weak and is forced to punish his elites for malfeasance. This explains why Sassou Nguesso is so eager to forgo shuffling, given the other monitoring technologies at his disposal.

Proposition 4 also explains variation in shuffling rates across portfolios. Assume that portfolios are either high H or low L level. High level portfolios, if their occupants discharge their coalition responsibilities appropriately, contribute more to regime welfare:

$$\frac{\partial \vartheta_D}{\partial e_H} > \frac{\partial \vartheta_D}{\partial e_L}$$

The loyalty and competence of high level appointees maximizes revenue and the regime's ability to suppress uprisings. However, since the occupants of high level portfolios have access to the regime's financial and military resources, I also assume that

$$\frac{\partial \vartheta_D}{\partial p_H} \leq \frac{\partial \vartheta_D}{\partial p_L} < 0$$

That is, high level appointees more quickly accumulate the resource endowments that threaten the autocrat's hold on power. In turn, their reappointment may be more dangerous for the autocrat. As the autocrat's monitoring technologies neutralize this effect – that is, as they render $\frac{\partial \quad D}{\partial p_H} \approx \frac{\partial \quad D}{\partial p_L}$ – then the autocrat systematically grants longer tenures to the occupants of his most systematic portfolios. He does so, indeed, not because they are more loyal or trustworthy or competent, though they may be. Rather, he does so because, conditional on strong monitoring technologies, the regime's survival relies on their hard work. Tenure security incentivizes it.

6.2 Tenure Policies and Elite Behavior

Conditional on the sorts of effective monitoring technologies explored in Chapters 4 and 5, Proposition 4 explains Sassou Nguesso's preference for predictable elite tenure. Confident their loyalty will be rewarded, his appointees serve him faithfully. This effect should be particularly strong for the elites who occupy the regime's most sensitive posts. For because Sassou Nguesso's survival relies

most on their competence, he incentivizes their loyalty even more, and should expect better performance as a result.

To probe Sassou Nguesso's tenure policy and its effect on elite behavior, I restrict attention to the 508 appointees to nearly 600 government portfolios recorded in the dataset of politics elites. As the descriptive statistics in Chapter 3 made clear, these appointees represent a mix of government ministers, military leaders, regional government executives, presidential counselors, and parastatal directors. It also includes appointees to Congo's constitutional institutions: the Supreme Court, High Council for Liberty of Communication, Economic and Social Council, Anti-Corruption Commission, and others. The precise mix of these different portfolio types appears in Figure 6.4. Sassou Nguesso's appointees to the constitutional institutions account for over 35% of his appointees; his mid level and senior military officer corps is the next largest, at 26%. Government ministers constitute a small minority, only 12%.

6.2.1 Shuffling and Punishment

Probing the determinants of elite shuffling presents two challenges. First, an appointee's probability of being removed may be a function of time already in office. In Congo, however, this "duration dependence" is difficult to model, since the probability that an appointee is removed could be an increasing or decreasing function of time already in office. If, for instance, surviving a first or second shuffle indicates that a minister is relatively competent or loyal, then the probability this minister is removed likely decreases with time. By contrast, if Sassou Nguesso finds longer ministerial tenure universally against his interests, then the probability a minister is removed will increase with time. Since the nature of this time dependence is unclear, a statistical model must not impose assumptions about it.

Second, the elite shuffle – the hallmark of which is its arbitrariness – is observationally equivalent to termination for malfeasance, for both yield an elite's unceremonious exit from the coalition.

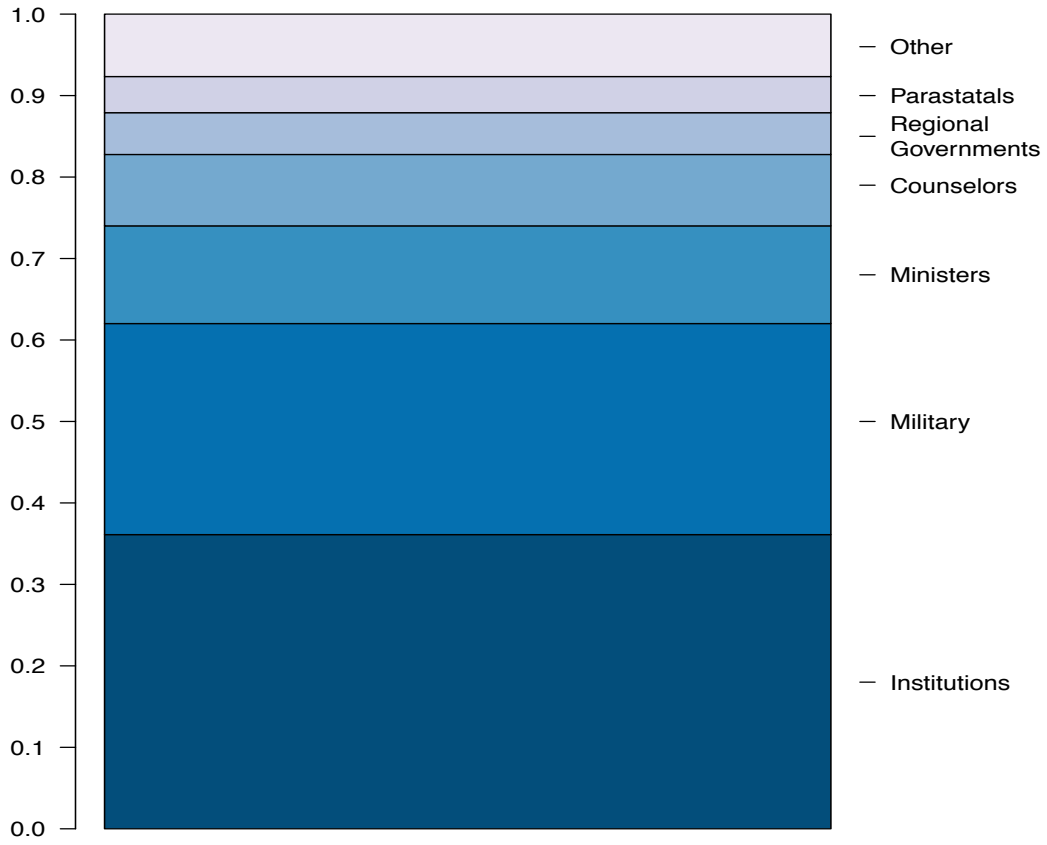

Figure 6.4: The mix of portfolio types in the dataset. Sassou Nguesso's appointees to the constitutional institutions account for over 35% of his appointees; his mid level and senior military officer corps is the next largest, at 26%. Government ministers comprise only 12% of the dataset.

Consequently, what might appear to be arbitrary shuffling may in fact be evidence of the autocrat's efficient monitoring apparatus and decisiveness in the face of challenges. In short, probing the determinants of elite tenure requires some measure of elite performance.

To address the first, I employ a Cox proportional hazard model, which estimates the probability that elite *j* is removed from the coalition in a given year *t* as a function of the sensitivity of his year *t* portfolio to the regime's survival. As in previous chapters, this variable is trichotomous, and was coded with the assistance of Congolese research assistants. To address the second, I control for

whether elite *j* engaged in any anti-regime behavior during the year. This enables me to distinguish between arbitrary shuffling and for cause termination. In so doing, I probe for evidence of a "punishment regime." I also control for a range of other elite-level factors that might render him a more or less attractive target for Sassou Nguesso: whether he is a biological relative, a member of the PCT, a veteran of the 1997 civil war, the distance of his birth village to Oyo, and a GLC initiate. I also control for the possibility that Sassou Nguesso employs different tenure policies with his government ministers and senior military officers. Since ministerial portfolios are particularly public, Sassou Nguesso may allocate them symbolically or employ them to secure electoral alliances with opposition parties, the topic of Chapter 7. Likewise, since the military has a well defined career hierarchy, Sassou Nguesso may grant his senior military officers much longer tenures than their civilian counterparts.

The results appear column 1 of Table 6.1, and they suggest that Sassou Nguesso's tenure decisions are far from arbitrary. Appointees to the regime's most sensitive positions are much less likely to be shuffled than their counterparts. The effect is both substantively and statistically significant. Receiving a high level appointment is associated with a 62% reduction in the probability of being shuffled in any year *t*. Likewise, challenging Sassou Nguesso in year *t* is associated with a 211% increase in the probability of being shuffled. Together these results suggest that Sassou Nguesso employs elite tenure strategically: to reward loyalty – particularly at the highest reaches of his coalition, where it is most crucial to the regime's survival – and punish disloyalty.

Estimates for the control variables are equally instructive. GLC initiates are 57% less likely to be shuffled in year *t*; veterans of his civil war effort are 61% less likely to be shuffled; and members of his Mbochi ethnic group are 66% less likely to be shuffled. Table 6.1 also suggests that government ministers are four times more likely to be shuffled in year *t* than other appointees. This, indeed, suggests why students of autocratic politics have long believed that autocrats shuffle arbitrarily. The government's most public positions are often its most symbolic, and autocrats likely employ those

Table 6.1: Determinants of Elite Shuffling

	Termination Cox	Termination Matching
Mid Level Appointment	-0.467	
	(0.429)	
High Level Appointment	-1.047†	-0.512*
	(0.575)	(0.2087)
Anti-Regime Activity	1.150**	
	(0.442)	
Oyo Distance	-0.001	
	(0.001)	
Mbochi Co-Ethnic	-1.139†	
	(0.650)	
GLC Initiate	-0.854*	
	(0.375)	
Military/Security Apparatus	-0.796	
	(1.062)	
Minister	1.616**	
	(0.368)	
Family	-0.691	
	(1.058)	
Concubine	-1.379††	
	(1.023)	
Civil War Veteran	-0.878†	
	(0.471)	
N	1843	123
Significance levels: †† : 20% † : 10% $*$: 5% $**$: 1%		

appointments to appease rival constituencies.

These results suggest a clear logic to Sassou Nguesso's tenure decisions. The characteristics that favor elite *j*'s initial appointment, as discussed in Chapter 3, also favor his longevity. Shuffling, far from being arbitrary, constitutes a punishment. The best way to earn termination is to publicly challenge Sassou Nguesso's legitimacy or privately plan a *coup d'état*. The model in Section 6.1 suggests that Sassou Nguesso is most likely to reward loyalty with tenure at his regime's most sensitive positions; these results suggest the same.

6.2.2 The Causal Effect of High Level Appointment

Appointees to Sassou Nguesso's most sensitive portfolios, Model 1 suggests, enjoy longer tenures than their counterparts. Yet it remains unclear whether this effect is causal. Does appointment to the high level post itself ensure that autocrats are more likely to reward loyalty and competence with predictable tenure, as the theoretical model in Section 6.1 suggests? Or are high level post appointees systematically different than their counterparts in ways that render them less likely to be terminated early? Put simply, does Sassou Nguesso simply trust his high level appointees more, and hence prefer to retain their services?

Chapters 3 and 5 made clear that appointees to the regime's most sensitive positions are systematically different than their counterparts. Sassou Nguesso fills his regime's most sensitive portfolios with his geographic in-group, Mbochi co-ethnics, veterans of his civil war effort, *Grande Loge du Congo* initiates, and family members. In the lexicon of causal inference, insofar as appointment to a high level portfolio constitutes a "treatment," the "treatment mechanism" is Sassou Nguesso himself, and he assigns this treatment in a thoroughly non-random way. Consequently, we must ensure that any observed relationship between high level portfolios and expected tenure is not generated by the attributes that earned occupants appointment in the first place.

To identify the causal effect of high level portfolios on elite tenure, I employ a matching esti-

Table 6.2: Balance Improvement for Matched Data

	Means Treated All Data	Means Control All Data	Means Treated Matched Data	Means Control Matched Data
Oyo Distance	117.4093	179.2093	117.4093	118.2119
Civil War Post	0.4028	0.0917	0.4028	0.3611
Family	0.1528	0.0250	0.1528	0.1528
Concubine	0.0000	0.0583	0.0000	0.0000
GLC	0.6528	0.2667	0.6528	0.6250
Mbochi	0.3333	0.1000	0.3333	0.3194

mator, which restricts attention to elites who are similar in all respects save the sensitivity of their appointment to the regime's survival. As in Chapters 3 and 5, this approach exploits the fact there are more candidates for the regime's most sensitive positions than there are positions themselves. Put simply, there is one Defense or Finance Minister at a time, but many civil war veterans, GLC initiates, and in-group members. By limiting the subsequent analysis to appointees who had the same probability of being selected for a high level post, the treatment assignment mechanism becomes as close to random as possible. Table 6.2 presents descriptive statistics for the treatment and control groups. Although the matching algorithm reduces the dataset to 192 distinct tenure spells – representing nearly 179 appointees – it creates treatment and control groups that are essentially identical in all respects save treatment status. High and low level appointees, in this matched dataset, are equally likely to be members of Sassou Nguesso's family, his concubine, the *Grande Loge du Congo*, his Mbochi co-ethnics, and his civil war effort.

With this matched dataset, I employ a Cox proportional hazard model to estimate the probability that high level appointees are shuffled in year t relative to their counterparts. The results appear in column 2 of Table 6.1, and they are similar to those from column 1. Appointment to the regime's most sensitive positions *causes* elites to enjoy longer tenures than their counterparts. The effect is again substantively large. Having ascended to the regime's most sensitive positions renders an elite

41% less likely to be removed from the coalition in year *t*. In short, once Sassou Nguesso entrusts a sensitive portfolio to a political appointee, that appointee is virtually assured of retaining the portfolio – or one similar to it – as long as he remains faithful. For the portfolios most crucial to his regime's survival, Sassou Nguesso has an abiding interest in linking loyalty with reward.

6.2.3 The Effect of Tenure on Elite Behavior

Students of autocratic politics have long maintained that lengthy tenure enables elites to accumulate financial and political resources that render them more threatening to the autocrat. This chapter challenges the conventional wisdom. In the presence of credible monitoring technologies – whether institutional or in the form of parallel governments – the model in Section 6.1 suggests that autocrats employ tenure to foster elite loyalty. Threats to the autocrat are detected early and their authors are removed from the coalition. Since predictable tenure decisions foster elite compliance, the probability of elite challenges to the autocrat should decline as tenure lengthens.

The results in Table 6.1, however, may be consistent with an alternative explanation. High level appointments may cause longer tenure because these elites have access to financial and military resources that are most threatening to the autocrat. Consequently, Sassou Nguesso may be forced to grant high level appointees longer tenures to secure their continued loyalty. If this alternative explanation is true, longer tenured elites should be more comfortable challenging Sassou Nguesso than their shorter tenured counterparts. As a result of their accumulated financial and military resources, they should be more willing to publicly question his policies and more open to threatening *coups d'état* to secure their interests.

In short, the theory developed in Section 6.1 and this alternative explanation generate opposing predictions about the relationship between tenure duration and the probability that elite *j* challenges the autocrat. To adjudicate between these competing explanations, I first estimate a nonparametric model to explore the relationship between tenure duration and the probability an elite

challenges Sassou Nguesso. The results appear in Figure 6.5. Consistent with the theoretical model in Section 6.1, Figure 6.5 suggests that longer tenure is indeed associated with loyalty to Sassou Nguesso. Appointees who have enjoyed the longest tenures are also the least likely to challenge him. The relationship is roughly linear.

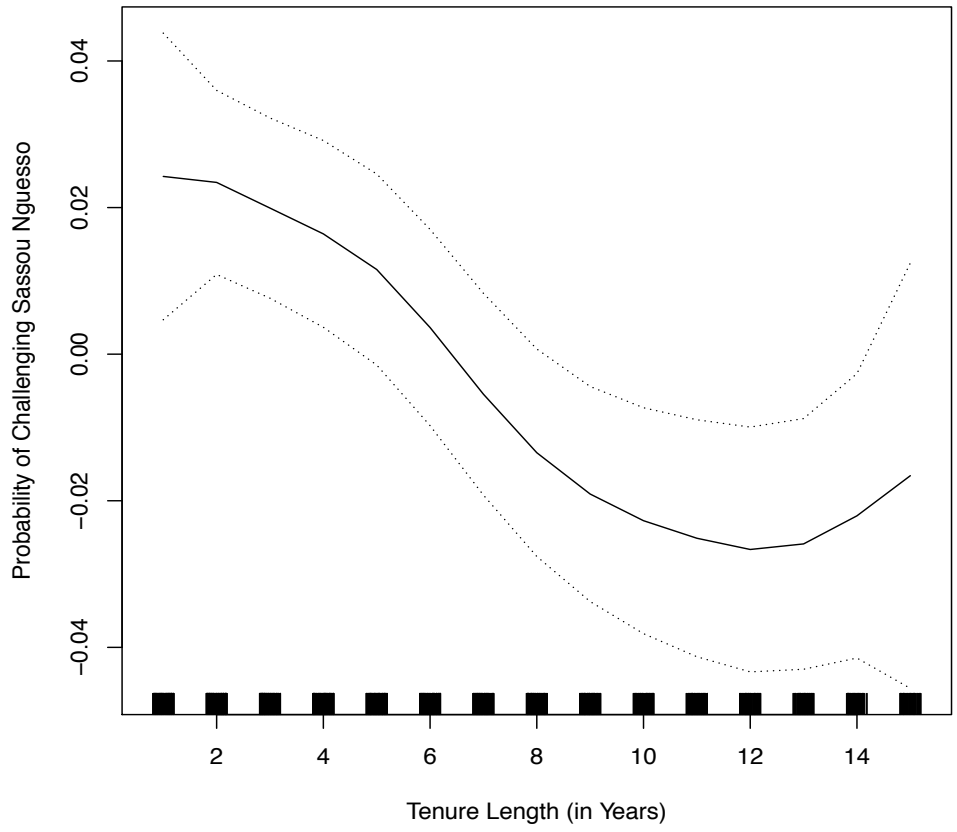

Figure 6.5: The non-parametric relationship between tenure duration and loyalty to Sassou Ngueso. Confidence intervals are represented by dotted lines.

Since the non-parametric model that produced Figure 6.5 pools appointees, this relationship could simply be a corollary of the "punishment regime" identified in Table 6.1. That is, tenure

Table 6.3: Tenure and Anti-Regime Activity

	Anti-Regime Activity Logit	Anti-Regime Activity Logit
Tenure	-0.092†	-0.091††
	(0.048)	(0.061)
Mid Level Appointment	0.553	0.541
	(0.048)	(1.122)
High Level Appointment	1.854††	1.850††
	(1.239)	(1.247)
GLC Initiate		0.021
		(0.674)
Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
N	2376	1911

Significance levels: †† : 20% † : 10% ∗ : 5% ∗∗ : 1%

may be associated with loyalty because the intrinsically disloyal are removed shortly after their appointments. Hence I consider changes in elite *j*'s behavior over time. As elite *j* accumulates a longer tenure, is he still more likely, as Figure 6.5 suggests, to grow more loyal to Sassou Nguesso? I consider this with a fixed effects logit model, which estimates the probability that elite *j* engages in anti-regime activity as a function of his tenure duration. I control for other time variant factors: the sensitivity of his portfolio to regime survival and whether he is a GLC initiate. I also include a full set of elite fixed effects, which accommodates any intrinsic loyalty or disloyalty to Sassou Nguesso.

Figure 6.6 presents the predicted probability that elite *j* challenges Sassou Nguesso by tenure duration, with 95% confidence intervals given by the horizontal lines. For an elite with a tenure spell of two years, the probability of challenging Sassou Nguesso is roughly 6.5%, already quite low. By year 15, however, the probability elite *j* challenges Sassou Nguesso has fallen to but 1%. In short, as elite *j*'s time in Sassou Nguesso's governing coalition grows, rather than using whatever financial or military resources he accumulates to challenge Sassou Nguesso, elite *j* appears to grow more loyal.

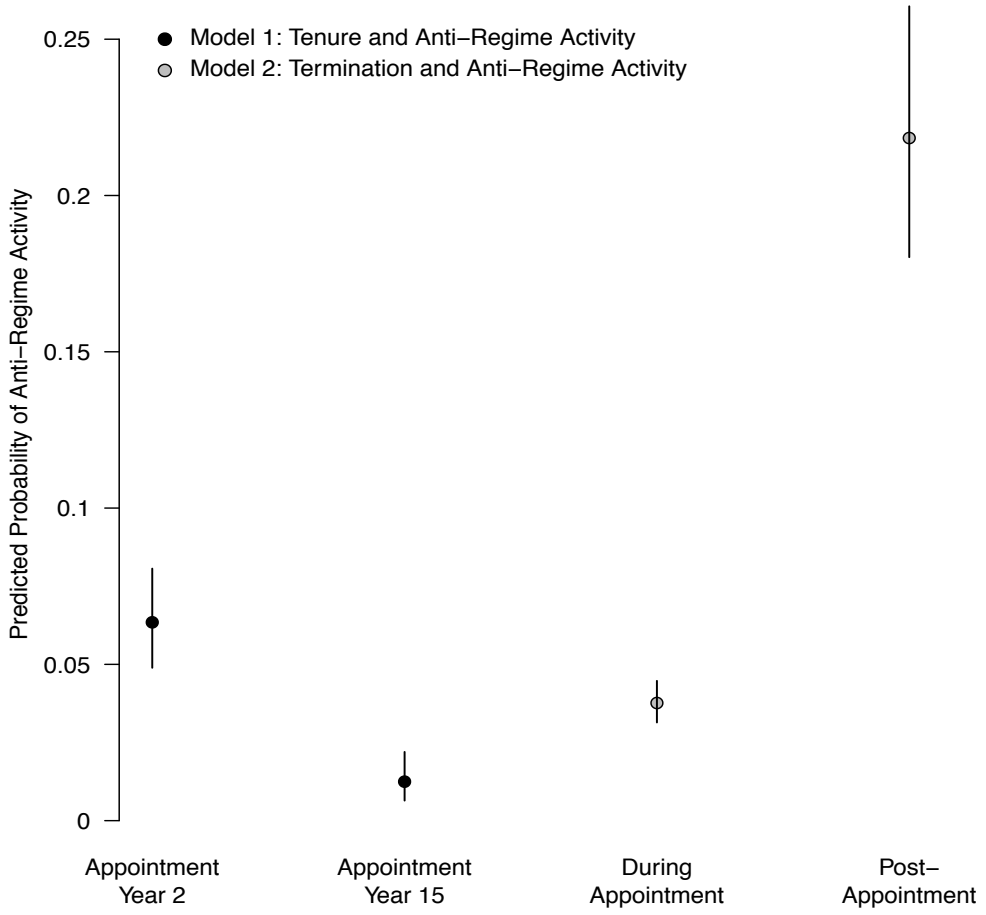

Figure 6.6: Predicted probabilities that elite *j* challenges Sassou Nguesso, generated from the results in Tables 6.3 and 6.4.

6.2.4 The Effect of Termination on Elite Behavior

The model in Section 6.1 suggests one final observable implication. If the prospect of reappointment generates elite loyalty – and not, for instance, just the threat of punishment – then elites should behave differently after having been removed from the coalition, regardless of whether the termination was merited. To consider this possibility, I reestimate the fixed effects model from Ta-

Table 6.4: Tenure and Anti-Regime Activity

	Anti-Regime Activity Logit	Anti-Regime Activity Logit
Post-Appointment	1.671**	1.631**
	(0.328)	(0.329)
GLC Initiate		-0.743††
		(0.481)
Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
N	3555	2662

Significance levels: †† : 20% † : 10% * : 5% ** : 1%

ble 6.3, only now the explanatory variable of interest is simply whether elite *j* is in the midst of his tenure spell or has already been terminated.

The results appear in Table 6.4 and are visualized in Figure 6.6. As Table 6.3 and the preceding chapters suggested, Sassou Nguesso's appointees are extremely unlikely to engage in conspiracies or publicly disparage his democratic credentials; these challenges occur with a probability of roughly 4%. After elite *j* has been terminated, however, the probability he challenges Sassou Nguesso rises to nearly 25%. In short, the prospect of reappointment induces elite loyalty. Once terminated, elites have few incentives to support the regime.

6.3 Conclusion

Sassou Nguesso, this chapter finds, employs coalition tenure strategically. Rather than shuffling elites arbitrarily, he assiduously cultivates a reputation for rewarding loyalty with tenure and punishing malfeasance with termination. The monitoring technologies detailed in Chapters 4 and 5 make this possible. Confident malfeasance will be detected, Sassou Nguesso forgoes preemptive shuffles as a substitute for monitoring. Confident their efforts will be rewarded, his appointees invest more in the regime and sacrifice more on his behalf. Since Sassou Nguesso has a particularly strong in-

terest in ensuring that occupants of his most portfolios remain loyal, he grants them particularly long tenures, and they respond by growing even more compliant over time, as Table 6.3 suggests. Without the prospect of reappointment, dismissed elites have few incentives to remain loyal. More broadly, autocrats employ tenure policies that render them stronger still.

Africa's autocrats confront the old challenges of elite management with new constraints. Without access to single parties and recourse to overwhelming violence, the preceding chapters conclude, Africa's autocrats secure compliance with social tools. Their ability to do so conditions their responses to the new challenges of the modern era. Chapters 7 and 8 demonstrate how.

Part III

Popular Suppression Without Violence

7

Electoral Alliances, Fraud, and Focal Moments, 2005-2009

Above all else, remember for me never to delay providing provisions until need compels you; but when you are especially well off, then contrive before you are at a loss, for you will get more from whomever you ask if you do not seem to be in difficulty and, moreover, you will be blameless in the eyes of your soldiers. In this way you will

> get more respect also from others .... Be assured that you will be able to speak more persuasive words at just the moment when you are especially able to show that you are competent to do both good and harm.
>
> – Xenophon, *The Education of Cyrus*

On June 5, 2005, six yachts departed Marseilles, France, for Pointe-Noire. At a cost of more than €3 million, the regatta was financed almost entirely by the Congolese government.[1] The French winners received a $100, 000 prize, presented by Sassou Nguesso himself [169]. Repulsed by the affair, most *Ponténégrins* were delighted when the yacht that bore Sassou Nguesso's 2002 campaign slogan, *La Nouvelle Esperance*, finished last.

The regatta ushered in a banner year for Sassou Nguesso. During the first week of January 2006 he was elected president of the African Union, an accomplishment that buttressed his claims to regional leadership. As Figure 5.13 made clear, he spent more time on foreign soil than ever. In addition to mediating conflicts in Cote d'Ivoire and Darfur, Sassou Nguesso represented Africa at a variety of international conferences, speaking widely on AIDS and sustainable development. He was even treated to an Oval Office meeting with President George W. Bush on June 8. Yes, the ongoing "vulture fund" lawsuits complicated things. A 2005 ruling in London courts both affirmed private creditors' right to seize Congolese oil at will and exposed the system of shell companies that Sassou Nguesso employed to circumvent the creditors [51]. A new lawsuit against Congo, Glencore, and BNP Paribas threatened the pre-financing arrangement by allowing private creditors to seize oil cargoes used as security [155].

But Sassou Nguesso was in the process of dispensing with these challenges. In addition to simply renaming the shell companies that obscured the origins of Congo's oil [79], he enlisted a team of

[1] Interview with Patrick Eric Mampouya, 22 December 2012.

Washington lobbyists to undermine the "vulture funds" and persuade the IMF and World Bank of his commitment to "good governance." Lead by Plato Cacheris – who earlier represented Aldrich Ames, Robert Hanssen, and Ana Montes, all federal agents turned Soviet or Cuban spies, as well as Monica Lewinsky – the campaign cost more than $10 million. The lobbying efforts focused on Representatives William Jefferson and Maxine Waters,[2] neither of whose reputations is sterling. In November 2009 Jefferson received a 13 year prison sentence for public corruption, while Waters' efforts to secure a $50 million federal bailout for a bank in which her husband held a significant financial interest landed her on a list of "most corrupt members of Congress" in 2005, 2006, 2009, and 2011 [112, 44].[3] Waters' staff met with Sassou Nguesso's lobbyists more than 40 times in 2007, and ultimately sponsored HR 2932 – dubbed the "Stop Vulture Funds Act" – which Sassou Nguesso's lobbyists even drafted [133, 106, 150]. Despite evidence of massive corruption – much compiled and released by Jay Newman – Sassou Nguesso persuaded the World Bank and IMF of his commitment to "good governance" and "pro-poor economic policies."[4] Accordingly, on March 9, 2006, they approved Congo's petition for debt relief, believing that the money once earmarked for debt service would be reallocated to the Congolese poor.[5] He celebrated all this in August, with a three week vacation at his Marbella, Spain, compound overlooking the Mediterranean.

For the first time since 2002, however, Sassou Nguesso confronted the prospect of elections: for the National Assembly in 2007, the Senate in 2008, and the presidency in 2009. These periods are fraught with tension for modern autocrats. As Chapter 1 made clear, the electoral institutions insisted upon by international donors represent unwelcome constraints on an autocrat's exercise of power. Most obviously, elections can be lost if fraud is sufficiently costly and incumbents are excessively confident. But even when autocrats enjoy easy recourse to fraud, elections constitute "focal

[2] *La Lettre du Continent*, 1 June 2006.
[3] The ultimate bailout was $12 million.
[4] Interview with Oscar Melhado, 5 December 2011.
[5] See IMF Press Release No. 06/46, dated 9 March 2006.

moments" of popular engagement in the political process and, increasingly, outrage. On most days, frustrated citizens are consumed with quotidian matters of food and shelter. During the *saisons politiques*, their heightened attention to politics yields a tinderbox that requires little more than a charismatic leader to ignite. Elections, in short, facilitate popular collective action. Since the end of the Cold War, Africa's autocrats have been 70% more likely to lose power during legislative election years and nearly 170% more likely to fall during executive election years. The rates are similar elsewhere. Indeed, these sorts of opposition movements, Bunce and Wolchik [40] remind us, were key to democratizing elections in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. The changing external environment – combined with Congo's reliance on foreign creditors – only complicated matters. Whereas once autocrats could suppress popular uprisings that accompanied fraudulent elections, the international community's insistence on human rights norms renders large scale repression potentially very costly.

Although Sassou Nguesso had consolidated his position among the elite, his compatriots were as frustrated as ever. Despite the regime's control over print and television journalism, many Congolese citizens had caught wind of the *biens mal acquis* affair. Indeed, it was so widely known that *La Semaine Africaine* published the following exchange between Sassou Nguesso and a French reporter on July 10, 2007:

> Sassou Nguesso: If this affair didn't reek of – let's say – colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, and gratuitous provocation, we would have let it die of its own poison.
>
> Reporter: The people who filed the lawsuit hope to recover the funds with which these real estate holdings were purchased and then retrocede them to the Congolese people. Do you really call that racism?
>
> Sassou Nguesso: It's rather shameful and sad to even discuss this affair. You know, all world leaders – whether from the Persian Gulf, Europe, or Africa – own castles or

palaces in France.[6]

These newspaper's journalists studiously abstain from criticizing Sassou Nguesso directly. After printing the interview's transcript, *La Semaine Africaine* reported that Senegal's press excoriated Sassou Nguesso.

The Congolese opposition was less restrained. Although it fully expected the elections to be rigged, it participated nonetheless, for it had no real alternative. If nothing else, giving voice to popular frustration would position them for a post-Sassou Nguesso Congo. General Emmanuel Ngouélondélé, head of Sassou Nguesso's intelligence services in the 1980s and father to Hugues, Brazzaville's mayor and Sassou Nguesso's son-in-law, called on Sassou Nguesso to resign. It was, Ngouélondélé said, the only way "to save Congo from sinking."[7] Ngouélondélé later called for a boycott of the "electoral masquerade" as a means to "sanction the power of Brazzaville."[8] Other opposition leaders joined calls for a boycott, decrying the regime's "Machiavellian schemes" and "electoral *coup d'état*."[9] Others attacked Sassou Nguesso more acerbically than ever before. "The power of Brazzaville," Nimy Madingou, a UPADS vice president, declared, "resolutely pillages the national resources."[10] "Democrat while in the opposition," another declared, "but dictator once in power."[11] One opposition leader even obliquely referenced the possibility of a popular uprising: "Let us cease being afraid," he declared, before a crowd of hundreds of supporters.[12]

However strong his position as he vacationed in Marbella – however compliant were his elite – Sassou Nguesso confronted the prospect of national elections in 2007, 2008, and 2009. He did so at a time when Congolese citizens had no shortage of opposition leaders around whom to mobilize.

[6] *La Semaine Africaine* 2709.
[7] *La Semaine Africaine*, 9 September 2006.
[8] *La Semaine Africaine*, 12 May 2007.
[9] *La Semaine Africaine*, 12 May 2007.
[10] *La Semaine Africaine*, 25 May 2007.
[11] *La Semaine Africaine*, 25 July 2007.
[12] *La Semaine Africaine*, 7 December 2007.

Like other modern autocrats, Sassou Nguesso had to figure out how to survive: how to organize the elections required by creditors while ensuring he succumbed to neither voting nor popular uprising.

This chapter explains how he did so. Its central argument is that Sassou Nguesso employs electoral alliances with opposition parties strategically. He forms them to neither guarantee electoral victory nor distribute patronage, as scholars have observed elsewhere.[13] With recourse to fraud virtually costless, Sassou Nguesso can guarantee electoral victory for himself. Rather, he crafts electoral alliances with opposition parties to prevent popular frustration from coalescing into open revolt. Section 7.1 documents this. Using a range of case study and quantitative evidence, it suggests that Sassou Nguesso targets leaders of the largest, ethnically homogenous parties for electoral alliances. Since they occupy central positions in broad social networks, they are among the few individuals who can coordinate mass protests.[14] Since they stand to benefit most if the protests succeed, they are more willing to accept the risks of leadership. In accepting electoral alliances, onetime opposition leaders forgo principled criticism in exchange for several years of ministerial perquisites. They become associated with the corrupt regime they once impugned.

Section 7.2 explores the strategy with the aid of a game theoretic model. It points to three conditions that render the strategy feasible. First, when electoral fraud is costless, autocrats create costly alliances only when sufficiently damaging to the opposition leader's public credibility. Second, since gains from corruption accrue over time – government ministries can only be plundered year by year – but opposition leaders lose popular legitimacy immediately after endorsements, the autocrat must credibly commit to honor the alliance well into the future. Finally, the beliefs of opposition leaders are crucial. Opposition leaders are more likely to trade their future political prospects when they be-

[13] Regarding the latter, Gandhi and Przeworski [69] and Gandhi [68] suggest that autocrats form opposition alliances to distribute patronage to potential regime opponents, thus forestalling criticism. Many scholars – including Barclay [16], Magaloni [117], Schedler [160], Lust-Okar [115], Bratton [35], Albaugh [8], Wright [189], Debs [54], Gandhi and Lust-Okar [70], and Wantchekon [186] – have suggested that autocrats secure electoral victory by keeping the opposition divided.

[14] For more on the dynamics of collective actions, see Olson [140] Tullock [179], and Hardin [84].

lieve the autocrat is least vulnerable to *coups d'état* from within his inner circle. Section 7.3 presents qualitative and quantitative evidence of all three.

7.1 Alliances Forged and Foregone

7.1.1 Exile and Return

Sassou Nguesso began preparing for the upcoming electoral season as early as 2004. He did so with his three primary rivals – Pascal Lissouba, Jacques Joachim Yhombi-Opango, and Bernard Kolélas – still in exile, having been excluded from the 2001 *Dialogue Nationale Sans Exclusive* and the amnesty that preceded it. In 1997 Sassou Nguesso had prevailed upon Chirac to prohibit the three from France, the better to prevent them from finding a patron to support their return to power. None of them, Sassou Nguesso rightly claimed, had renounced violence.

Sassou Nguesso is most susceptible to French pressure, and so his three opponents reversed course in April 2003. They met at the Hotel Silmandé in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Their first since the 1997 war, the meeting was sponsored by President Blaise Campaoré, among Sassou Nguesso's oldest nemeses. The three crafted a joint strategy. By renouncing violence and accepting Sassou Nguesso's legitimacy, they would remove any justification for being denied entry to France. Once in Paris, they would travel the same circuit as Sassou Nguesso in 1995, when he plotted to retake Brazzaville by force: the Elysée Palace, military command, and freemasons, among others. At worst, the exiles figured, they would negotiate their return to Congo as a unit and constitute a joint opposition in the 2009 presidential elections. At best, they too would retake Brazzaville by force.

The first Congolese graduate of France's Saint-Cyr military academy, Yhombi-Opango took up residence outside Paris in June 2003. After a year of lobbying French political and military leaders, he forced a meeting with Sassou Nguesso in September 2004 at the Hôtel Castiglione, steps from the Elysée Palace. Both men were escorted by an entourage. Yhombi-Opango's supporters protested

Sassou Nguesso outside, while older brother Maurice and Henri Lopès, Congo's longtime ambassador to France, accompanied Sassou Nguesso into the hotel. The two men, however, met alone. For all its promise, this meeting marked the end of opposition unity.[15]

His rivals having renounced violence, Sassou Nguesso was quickly losing his justification – at least in the eyes of the French – for not permitting their return to Congo prior to the 2007 legislative elections. Of course, Sassou Nguesso recognized, doing so entailed risk. For although they had renounced violence to the French, their commitment was not fully credible. When addressing throngs of angry supporters, Sassou Nguesso knew, his rivals might succumb to the temptation to urge violence, which could quickly spin out of control. The last decision Sassou Nguesso wanted to confront was whether to command his military to open fire on thousands of unarmed protesters in downtown Brazzaville.

By 2004 Sassou Nguesso knew he would have to form electoral alliances with his onetime rivals. Other domestic opposition leaders threatened as well. André Milongo remained the undisputed leader of southern Pool, among the few political leaders untainted by corruption. Mathias Dzon served in Sassou Nguesso's Avenue Montaigne embassy in the 1990s and Minister of Finance until 2002, and he retained a sizable following in Gamboma. More importantly, he had amassed a small fortune, easily sufficient to attract disaffected urban youth. And despite his age, Pointe-Noire and the surrounding Kouilou region still professed loyalty to Jean Pierre Thystère-Tchicaya.

The ministerial portfolios that would be required to secure these electoral alliances are scarce, however. There are but 30 or so,[16] and roughly 15 are far too sensitive to confide to a neophyte or someone with questionable loyalties. That left 15 for Sassou Nguesso to allocate, and he had also to reward his longtime loyalists. Sassou Nguesso ultimately targeted Kolélas and Yhombi-Opango, and with as much fanfare as possible.

[15] The preceding account is pieced together from interviews with senior advisors to Yhombi-Opango, Lissouba, and Kolélas, all of which occurred between October 2011 and May 2012.

[16] The actual number of government ministers fluctuates between 30 and 40.

7.1.2 Alliances Forged I: Kolélas and the MCDDI

Kolélas' wife died unexpectedly in September 2005, and by all accounts he was crushed. He also felt the weight of tradition. "It is more important," the Congolese proverb goes, "to attend a funeral than a wedding," and so Kolélas' personal imperative was to bury his wife on Congolese soil. Exiled for eight years, he remained the undisputed leader of Congo's populous Lari ethnic group. During the 1993 legislative elections – widely regarded as the only free and fair legislative elections in Congolese history – his MCDDI virtually swept the Pool region, winning 11 of 16 seats and all six seats in Brazzaville's Bacongo and Makélékélé neighborhoods. Although the 2007 legislative elections remained two years away, Sassou Nguesso moved quickly to exploit the elder statesman's weakness. His access point: Guy Brice Parfait, Kolélas' eldest son, and Hellot Matson Mampouya, his young spokesman, who were both eager to reconcile with Sassou Nguesso in exchange for political careers of their own.[17] After more than eight years of exile, Kolélas returned to Congo for his wife's burial in October 2005. Brazzaville's southern quarters were so excited – and Kolélas himself such a symbol of Lari struggle – that MCDDI supporters clashed with police on October 13, a day before his arrival.

Sassou Nguesso tightly choreographed Kolélas' return. His flight from Paris on October 14 was forced to land late at night. There would be no reporters, no throngs of supporters, no speeches, and no lasting images of a great homecoming.[18] Kolélas returned permanently on December 8, 2005, after the National Assembly formally granted him amnesty "for the sake of national reconciliation and peace" [91].[19] He flew directly to Oyo, where, on December 13, he placed a bouquet of flowers on the tomb of Valentin Ambendet Nguesso, Sassou Nguesso's eldest brother who died in 2004. He did so before visiting the graves of his ancestors, his deceased Ninja soldiers, and the thousands of

[17] Interviews with Anatole Collinet Makosso and Guy Mafimba between April and May 2012.

[18] *La Semaine Africaine*, 27 October 2005.

[19] Gabriel Entcha Ebia added that Congolese citizens could still file lawsuits against Kolélas: "They can still demand reparations for what they suffered."

ethnic *Lari* who were killed by Sassou Nguesso's Cobras.[20] Ten days later, on December 23, he stood before a Makélékélé crowd and announced his "solemn support" for Sassou Nguesso:

> We support the government authorities of our country, because they are engaged in the work of peace, of understanding, and national reconciliation. We must support, in particular, President Sassou Nguesso and his government, and then we will attain the objectives we have long held.[21]

Enraged, many of his supporters foreswore the MCDDI.[22] "I don't know you anymore," one member of the national executive committee declared. "What happened to your struggle for the oppressed Congolese nation and for democracy?" Another longtime MCDDI member wrote: "To be clear, to ally oneself to the authors of the genocide of 1998-1999 is simply unbearable to the MCDDI's traditional voters" [125].

The terms of the political bargain crystallized over the next several months.[23] In addition to amnesty, Sassou Nguesso granted Kolélas a seat in parliament following the 2007 elections. His MCDDI also reclaimed its political life. After years of exclusion from the National Assembly, the MCDDI received five of 14 parliamentary seats from Pool and two low level ministerial portfolios in the 2009 government. The recipients: Guy Brice Parfait and Hellot Matson Mampouya, who urged Kolélas to accept Sassou Nguesso's offer in the first place. In return, Kolélas had only to publicly ally himself with Sassou Nguesso: to announce his "solemn support" before his constituents and to have his son, Guy Brice Parfait, co-direct Sassou Nguesso's 2009 presidential campaign.

In reality, Kolélas did much more than simply announce his "solemn support" for Sassou Nguesso. He sacrificed virtually all of the credibility he had accumulated among ethnic Lari. Once in the gov-

[20] Interview with Guy Mafimba, 4 April 2012.
[21] *La Semaine Africaine*, 27 December 2005.
[22] Interview with Felix Batantu, 27 July 2010.
[23] Interviews with former senior advisors to Kolélas, 14 May 2012.

ernment, the MCDDI excused Sassou Nguesso for all manner of crimes. One episode, during the *biens mal acquis* affair:

> [MCDDI leaders] were invited not only to prepare a message of support for President Denis Sassou Nguesso, but also to denounce, at the same time, the French government and political leaders for attacking Congo's national sovereignty by way of Transparency International.[24]

The MCDDI was quickly bankrupted as a political force. "He betrayed our sacrifices," most former supporters believe, "for the careers of his children."[25]

Reportedly suffering from Alzheimer's disease, Kolélas was hospitalized in Paris in late 2007 and died in November 2009. During the funeral Sassou Nguesso took Kolélas' cane – which marked him as the Lari ethnic group's symbolic leader – and transferred it to his son, Guy Brice Parfait, then Sassou Nguesso's Minister of Fisheries. At the very end of the ceremony, Sassou Nguesso reclaimed it. The population watched in disbelief. "At that moment they understood that the party was essentially dead."[26] Of course, some recognized that even earlier. Another MCDDI member wrote this in 2008:

> For the PCT, the alliance is a tactical move. It is a strategy to discredit this opposition party, which remains the ultimate depository of any left over hope of the Congolese people. The alliance is a strategy to bring the party to a state of total collapse. ...The alliance is not for governing. It is a tactical move to weaken the opposition [125].

[24] Interview with Ghys Fortuné Dombe Bemba, 28 June 2013.
[25] Interview with Felix Batantu, 28 March 2012.
[26] Interview with Patrick Eric Mampouya and Wilfried Kivouvou, 16 June 2013.

7.1.3 Alliances Forged 2: Yhombi-Opango and the RDD

Once Kolélas returned, Yhombi-Opango was increasingly isolated. Although Yhombi-Opango remained Owando's favorite son, his *Rassemblement pour la Démocratie et le Développement* (RDD) had less capacity to mobilize threatening, large scale protests than Kolélas' MCDDI. Its followers, though ferociously loyal, were simply less numerous.[27] With little leverage and Sassou Nguesso's position secure, there was little point to remaining in Paris.

Yhombi-Opango was amnestied on May 18, 2007, less than a month before the June legislative elections. He returned to Congo on August 10, after nearly a decade in exile and five days before celebrating Congo's 48 years of independence with Sassou Nguesso and Kolélas in Owando. A master of symbolism, Sassou Nguesso pressured Yhombi-Opango to overnight in Oyo before continuing to his hometown of Owando. Yhombi-Opango refused, for the optics would have been disastrous: paying tribute to Oyo's favorite son rather than mourning the wartime casualties of his Owando compatriots.[28] The RDD retained its independence in the months to come. It denounced Sassou Nguesso as "committed to personal and clan enrichment"[29] and called for a boycott of the 2007 legislative elections. As the local elections approached in July 2008, Yhombi-Opango went on: "Congo is a dying society, a society in decay."[30]

On December 21, 2008, Yhombi-Opango endorsed Sassou Nguesso's bid for the presidency, and the electoral accords between the PCT and RDD were signed two months later. If Sassou Nguesso won, the accords stipulated, the two parties would "govern together." Although Yhombi-Opango remained a political force, he lacked the leverage to demand much else. The RDD expected two or three ministerial portfolios, but received just one. Martial Matthieu Kani was named Minister of Tourism in September 2009, an outcome that stunned even the RDD. For Yhombi-Opango had

[27] They won but four parliamentary seats in the 1993 legislative elections.
[28] Interview with Guy Mafimba, 4 April 2012.
[29] *La Semaine Africaine*, 11 May 2007.
[30] *La Semaine Africaine*, 7 June 2008.

proposed Guy Mafimba, who, after accompanying him to Ouagadougou in 2003 and organizing a series of Paris protests in 2004, had become an honorary son. By contrast, Kani had family connections to Pierre Moussa, Sassou Nguesso's longtime Minister of Plan, and was thus viewed by Sassou Nguesso as more malleable.[31]

The RDD knew the electoral accords would cost public credibility. Said one senior RDD official:

> Sassou Nguesso creates alliances with opposition parties to liquidate them. When he senses a party is strong, he aims for an alliance. That's precisely what he did with Yhombi-Opango in Paris. He plays on whatever he can: co-ethnicity, family sentiment, political interest. He sought to destroy all the credibility Yhombi-Opango acquired while in exile. It's what he did with Kolélas too. He opens himself to you and then he breaks you.[32]

The RDD even had internal discussions about this prospect prior to signing the accords. "It was a tactical alliance," one senior party official recalled. "We resolved to criticize the government when it merited criticism."[33] In so doing, the RDD hoped to avoid the MCDDI's fate.

By December 2011 the first fissures within the RDD had emerged. Yhombi-Opango's 2009 endorsement, as everyone expected, cost him public credibility. As Kani directed ministerial funds to his personal network rather than the party apparatus – the RDD, by April 2012, had neither an official headquarters nor sufficient finances to support candidates in the 2012 legislative elections – Mafimba began preparing his bid for party leadership.[34] Rather than allocating its resources to the 2012 legislative elections, the RDD was increasingly wracked by infighting. For his part, Sassou Nguesso began treating the RDD as dispensable. The RDD expected that the PCT would concede

[31] Interview with Guy Mafimba, 16 February 2012.
[32] Interview with Guy Mafimba, 14 May 2012.
[33] Interview with Guy Mafimba, 14 May 2012.
[34] Interview with Guy Mafimba, 16 February 2012.

it at least one parliamentary seat from Owando, its stronghold. Instead, the PCT ran government ministers in both of Owando's districts, and claimed victory. Yhombi-Opango's son said this:

> These people – the PCT – don't like us. The problem in Owando is serious. Two ministers from the presidential majority, called on to defend the same policy agenda, find each other face to face in the election. The alliance will be ruined in Owando. But that's what the PCT wants. It wants to erase the RDD from the political map.[35]

7.1.4 Alliances Foregone I: Milongo and UDR Mwinda

Sassou Nguesso's decision to forge alliances with Kolélas and Yhombi-Opango – however temporary – imposed opportunity costs. For he implicitly allowed Dzon, Milongo, Thystère-Tchicaya, and Lissouba's many deputies to remain in the opposition. He did so because none was as politically threatening. None were so widely recognized as the leaders of such large ethnic groups.

Elected Transitional Prime Minister during the 1991 National Conference, Milongo oversaw Arthur Andersen's ill-fated audit of the oil sector. He did so at great personal cost. After rebuffing Elf's attempts to purchase his acquiescence to the *Françafrique* system, Milongo nearly lost power to a *coup d'état* [162]. Regarding as thoroughly incorruptible [47, 49], Milongo represented Boko, Pool, in the National Assembly since 1993. He routinely decried the regime's oil management as "opaque,"[36] criticized the "enrichment of the presidential clan,"[37] "denounced the illegality" of the 2002 presidential election and called for a boycott,[38] described Sassou Nguesso's *La Nouvelle Esperance* as a "disaster,"[39] and remained uniquely willing to give interviews to foreign journalists and researchers about the massive graft of the regime.

[35] *La Semaine Africaine*, 3 July 2012.
[36] *La Semaine Africaine*, 8 February 2003.
[37] *La Semaine Africaine*, 6 September 2003.
[38] *La Semaine Africaine*, 16 February 2002.
[39] *La Semaine Africaine*, 25 February 2006.

Unfortunately for Milongo – and perhaps the country – his constituency was also small. Milongo's ancestral birth village is Boko, Pool, which contains but 15, 000 residents. It abuts the Democratic Republic of Congo to the south and central Pool to the north, which marks the ethnic boundary with Kolélas' Lari ethnic group. Given Kolélas' great popularity, this ethnic boundary sharply limited Milongo's ability to expand his constituency. Sassou Nguesso would have liked to include Milongo's UDR Mwinda in his coalition, but he was unwilling to relinquish an extremely important ministerial portfolio to do so. Milongo, for his part, would have only accepted a prime minister type position.[40]

These considerations became largely moot on July 23, 2007, when Milongo unexpectedly died. Thereafter UDR Mwinda was hamstrung by a succession battle. Although Guy Romain Kinfoussia was next in line for the party's leadership, Stéphane Milongo, André's son, sought power for himself. In February 2008, some six months after his father's death and two months before UDR Mwinda's national congress, Stéphane launched a quiet campaign to discredit Kinfoussia. It failed – Kinfoussia was elected president during the April national congress – and so Stéphane created his very own "Authentic" UDR Mwinda,[41] dividing his late father's political legacy against itself. Stéphane proceeded to align his "Authentic" UDR Mwinda with Gabriel Bokilo,[42] closely affiliated with Sassou Nguesso. As his late father's allies criticized Sassou Nguesso for "pillaging the country's natural resources,"[43] Stéphane refrained, declaring his opposition "constructive."[44] This "constructive" opposition entailed rejecting his former allies' calls for a truly independent electoral commission:

> We could request a new electoral commission. But we think that doing so is not really feasible [three months prior to voting] and probably not even smart. We remain per-

[40] Interview with Claude Malela Soba, 5 April 2012.
[41] *La Semaine Africaine*, 11 April 2008 and 6 June 2008.
[42] *La Semaine Africaine*, 30 September 2008 and *La Semaine Africaine*, 17 October 2008.
[43] *La Semaine Africaine*, 25 May 2007.
[44] *La Semaine Africaine*, 8 April 2009.

> suaded that [Sassou Nguesso's] government, thanks to its previous efforts, will make an effort to include the opposition on the electoral commission as currently constituted. ...[Sassou Nguesso's government] has extended an open hand.[45]

Later, Stéphane said nothing about the widespread fraud that attended Sassou Nguesso's reelection in 2009. Kinfoussia continued his acerbic criticism:

> Congo's illness is President Sassou Nguesso and his entourage, who undermine our country's development despite its enormous riches.[46]

Sassou Nguesso makes a habit of funding the "moderate" or "constructive" opposition: politicians who neither criticize the regime's massive graft nor impugn his democratic credentials. "Whenever there are several tendencies that emerge within a party," one high ranking Senator and occasional Sassou Nguesso ally told me, "Sassou Nguesso is always responsible for the division."[47] Indeed, virtually all *Brazzavillois* believe Stéphane's "Authentic" UDR-Mwinda is financed by Sassou Nguesso. But neither he nor Kinfoussia is an attractive target for an electoral alliance. Stéphane has little public credibility, and Kinfoussia has little support outside Boko and Brazzaville's southern quarters. When the Milongo family formally entered the regime, its price was low: the Boko mayoralty – an appointed position – for Milongo's widow.

7.1.5 Alliances Foregone 2: Lissouba and UPADS

In 2005, eight years after Lissouba fled into exile, his UPADS still dominated the southern regions of Niari, Bouenza, and Lékoumou. "UPADS is written into our hearts," one former member told me. "We will never give up Lissouba's vision."[48] This dominance gives it a virtually insuperable

[45] *La Semaine Africaine*, 8 April 2009.
[46] *La Semaine Africaine*, 8 April 2009.
[47] Interview with Nicéphore Fylla Saint-Eudes, 1 February 2012.
[48] Interview with Marcel Moukoko, 30 April 2012.

demographic advantage. The three regions accounted for nearly 30% of Congo's non-Brazzaville population in the 2007 census and enabled Lissouba to claim 36% of the popular vote in the first round of the 1992 presidential elections.

Densely populated as they are, the three regions are also quite fractious. They contain a range of smaller ethnic groups, population centers, and agricultural zones. Consequently, UPADS has long been the most heterogeneous, regionally dispersed of Congo's political parties. "The great advantage of the MCDDI is its homogeneity," one former UPADS leader told me. "We are simply too divided, too vast."[49] Lissouba was the only figure who could unite its three constituent regions, and without him UPADS was the first party to crack.

UPADS officials began returning from exile as early as 2001 to participate in the *Dialogue Nationale Sans Exclusive*, renouncing their party membership and accepting positions in Sassou Nguesso's government. Claudine Munari, formerly Lissouba's cabinet director and whose father funded the Cocoye war effort,[50] was given a National Assembly seat in 2002 and appointed minister in 2009; Laurent Tengo, a top aide, became Sassou Nguesso's legal counselor; and Francois Nguimbi, another senior aide, received a seat in the National Assembly in 2002. Those who remained UPADS members fought over leadership positions. Since the returns from controlling the party apparatus were so great, UPADS barons formed alliances across regions rather than within them.[51] Consequently, while UPADS produced virtually no splinter parties, the party essentially undermined itself.

Since 2005 there have emerged three primary "tendencies" within the party. Christophe Moukouéké had served as secretary general of UPADS since 1992, when Lissouba was elected president. He negotiated his return to Congo in 2007, intending to retain his position. Pascal Tsaty Mabiala, however, elected secretary general in 2006, had no intention of relinquishing it. The squabbling continued through the 2009 presidential election season. UPADS narrowed its candidate list to

[49]Interview with Marcel Moukoko, 30 April 2012.
[50]Interviews with former Cocoye militia leaders in May 2012.
[51]Interview with Marcel Moukoko, 30 April 2012.

two: Ange Edouard Poungui, who served as Sassou Nguesso's prime minister in the 1980s and is married to a cousin of the president, and Joseph Kignoumbi kia Mboungou, selected as the party's candidate in 2002. In the final round of voting Kignoumbi kia Mboungou "suspended" his participation for "lack of transparency."[52] He went on to run as an independent UPADS candidate, a decision most suspect was orchestrated by Sassou Nguesso to undermine Poungui. For in December 2009 Kignoumbi kia Mboungou was given a leadership position in the National Assembly.

The irony of it all, as one UPADS candidate put it: "Sassou Nguesso himself always financed the party's infighting."[53] And this infighting – especially the open secret that it was financed by Sassou Nguesso – resulted in the party losing its popular credibility on its own. The party did to itself what Sassou Nguesso did to other parties. For the party's ethnic heterogeneity limited its cohesiveness, and hence its ability to mobilize its constituents against Sassou Nguesso. In turn, Sassou Nguesso never regarded UPADS as a serious threat to his hold on power, and was never compelled to co-opt it.

7.1.6 Alliances Foregone 3: Dzon and Thystère-Tchicaya

Sassou Nguesso never seriously considered alliances with Dzon and Thystère-Tchicaya. Unlike the others, their parties figured centrally in Sassou Nguesso's earlier governments.[54] From Chapter 3, Dzon served as Finance Minister between 1997 and 2002, while three Thystère-Tchicaya aides occupied low level ministerial portfolios. Both men were casualties of Sassou Nguesso's effort to construct a geographic in-group centered on Oyo. Identified as post-war collaborators, they had virtually no public credibility as the electoral season began.

The cost was particularly high for Thystère-Tchicaya, long recognized as the political – even the

[52] Interview with Marcel Moukoko, 2 July 2013.

[53] Interview with Marcel Moukoko, 30 April 2012.

[54] As discussed in Chapter 3, Michel Mampouya (MCDDI) and Martin Mberi (UPADS) accepted positions in Sassou Nguesso's post-war government. But they did so without Kolélas' and Lissouba's approval.

spiritual – leader of the ethnic *Vili* who dominated Pointe-Noire and the surrounding Kouilou region. Ethnic Vili loathed Sassou Nguesso almost as much as other southerners. When he folded the RDPS political machine into the PCT in 1997 and 1998, most Vili were stunned. "It was a betrayal," one longtime Pointe-Noire resident told me, "it was grave."[55]

> What were we supposed to do? We joined the RDPS to oppose Denis Sassou Nguesso. The RDPS is an ethnic symbol, an emblem of what it is to be Vili. For the founder of the RDPS to be swallowed by the PCT, it was the end of his political career. Thystère-Tchicaya lost so much credibility with the population. So much.[56]

Once dismissed from the coalition, Thystère-Tchicaya attempted to regain his credibility as an opposition leader. On March 24, 2007, just four months prior to the legislative elections, Thystère-Tchicaya co-authored an open letter from Paris with Justin Lekoundzou, by then an enemy of the regime as well. Together they called for a "truly independent electoral commission," which would enable the country "to avoid the missteps of the past that could yet again be a source of useless suffering for the Congolese people."[57] In addition to acknowledging the electoral fraud of the past, it also raised the specter of violence in the future.

Thystère-Tchicaya died on June 20, 2008, his RDPS in shambles. As *Talassa* put it:

> A profound, grave political crisis is undermining the ranks of the RDPS. Its members no longer speak with one voice, as profound dissensions at anti-democratic behaviors threaten, more and more, the basic operations and, above all, the future of the party: the political heritage of President Jean Pierre Thystère-Tchicaya is threatened with total disappearance.[58]

[55] Interview with Benoît Bemba, 2 May 2012.
[56] Interview with Benoît Bemba, 2 May 2012.
[57] *La Semaine Africaine*, 27 March 2007.
[58] *Talassa*, 14 November 2008.

With Thystère-Tchicaya having lost "so much" of his credibility and his party wracked by infighting, Sassou Nguesso had no need to target it for a new electoral alliance. His earlier efforts had succeeded.

7.1.7 Targeting and Compliance

Sassou Nguesso creates alliances with opposition leaders, most Congolese citizens believe, not to win elections. Sassou Nguesso can secure victory with fraud, after all, just as opposition leaders lose their ability to deliver votes once they ally with him. Rather, Sassou Nguesso targets the opposition leaders with the greatest potential to mobilize future unrest: those opposition leaders who constitute the central, trusted nodes of broad social networks. More practically, Sassou Nguesso targets the opposition leaders who preside over large, *ethnically homogenous* political parties.

The quantitative evidence affirms this. To probe the determinants of electoral alliances, I assembled a dataset of Congo's political parties since Sassou Nguesso returned to power in 1997. For each of 129 parties, the dataset records demographic and professional information about its leadership, representation in the National Assembly, ministerial appointments, electoral accords, splinter parties and leadership struggles, and performance in the 1993 legislative elections. The result is a party-year dataset with nearly 2,000 observations. Ascertaining the size and ethnic homogeneity of Congo's political parties is difficult. Parties do not maintain reliable membership lists. The Congolese census studiously avoids references to ethnicity. There are no public opinion polls. But Congo's ethnic groups roughly correspond to regional borders: the Vili are located overwhelmingly in Kouilou, the Lari and Bacongo in Pool, the Sangha in Sangha, the Mbondjo in Likouala, the Téké in Plateaux, and the Mbochi in Cuvette. Moreover, the results of the 1993 legislative elections – the most free and fair elections in the country's history [47] – provide a reasonably good measure of party popularity across the country.

Accordingly, I measure party *k*'s ethnic homogeneity by the proportion of its seats in the 1993

legislative elections from its largest region of support.[59] Since the MCDDI's seats all came from the Pool region, it receives a 1.0 for ethnic homogeneity. By contrast, since Lissouba's UPADS drew only a third of its total from its largest region, Bouenza, it receives a 0.33 for ethnic homogeneity. The measure is not perfect, but it is unbiased. It also accords with the conventional wisdom in Congo. Likewise, I measure party *k*'s size by the number of its seats in the 1993 National Assembly. By this measure – again, as all Congolese citizens attest – UPADS is the country's largest party, with the MCDDI and PCT shortly behind.

Figure 7.1 presents descriptive statistics for Congo's political parties.[60] In more than 95% of party-years, the founder was alive and politically active within Congo. Leadership struggles have been rare, occurring in only 10% of party-years. Congo's parties tend to be ethnically heterogenous, and have received ministerial posts in less than 5% of party-years. The middle panel suggests that most of Congo's political parties are small, based around a single charismatic individual. Indeed, the vast majority failed to win seats in the 1993 legislative elections. The bottom panel confirms that Sassou Nguesso forms opposition alliances selectively; Congo's parties opposition leaders have consistently represented between 10% and 25% of Sassou Nguesso's government ministers.

I estimate the probability that party *k* receives a ministerial portfolio in year *t* with three statistical models. First, since parties regularly gain and lose ministerial portfolios, I employ a simple logit model, both with and without a lagged outcome variable. Since electoral alliances may be formed for different reasons than they are terminated, I employ a Markov transition model, which restricts attention to parties that, in year $t - 1$, were excluded from the government. In all models I control for whether party *k* was undermined by a splinter party or leadership struggle in year *t* – rendering it a less attractive target for Sassou Nguesso – and year fixed effects to accommodate any unobserved

[59] I exclude Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire electoral districts, since their neighborhoods are less ethnically homogenous than Congo's regions.

[60] As discussed in Chapter 8, Sassou Nguesso has encouraged his closest aides to create permanently allied political parties to dilute the influence of his own *Parti Congolais du Travail*. Hence I exclude from analysis parties that have been allied to Sassou Nguesso for the entire post-1997 period.

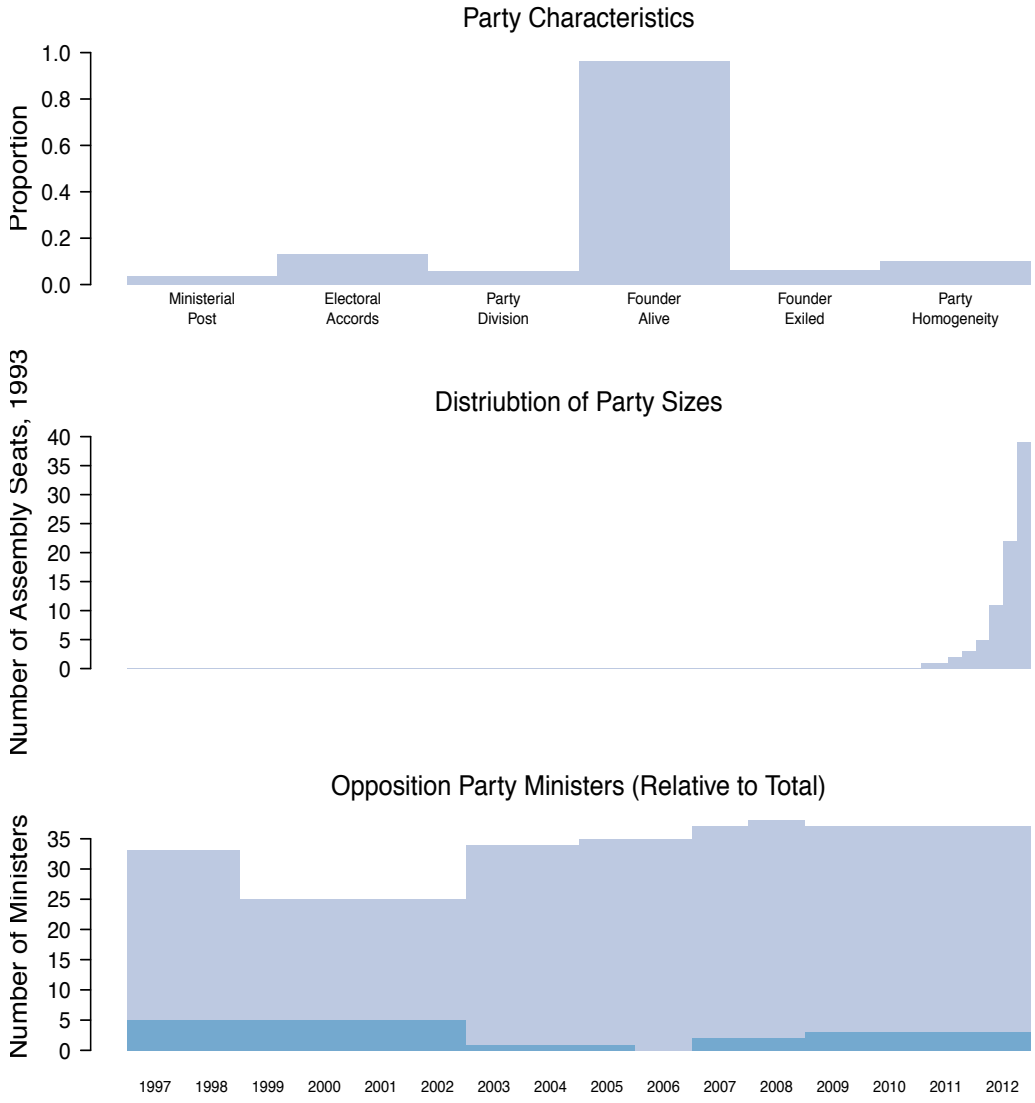

Figure 7.1: Descriptive statistics for Congo's 129 political parties since 1997. The top panel gives averages for a range of party characteristics. The middle panel presents the distribution of the number of seats won by each current political party in the 1993 legislative elections. The bottom panel records the number of opposition ministers in each of Sassou Nguesso's governments relative to the total number of ministers.

Table 7.1: Determinants of Electoral Alliances

	Ministerial Post Logit	Ministerial Post Logit	Ministerial Post Markov Transition
Seats1993	-0.012	-0.608*	-0.053
	(0.030)	(0.2548)	(0.339)
Seats1993× Party Concentration	0.471**	1.937**	1.510**
	(0.097)	(0.642)	(0.556)
Party Division	-1.369	-21.49**	-19.12†
	(1.136)	(7.917)	(10.22)
Ministerial Post_{t-1}		64.66	
		(6786.0)	
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	1043	970	934

Significance levels: † : 10% * : 5% ** : 1%

annual characteristics.

The results appear in Table 7.1, and are relatively consistent across models. Party size has virtually no effect on whether Sassou Nguesso targets an opposition leader for an electoral alliance. Some leaders of small parties are targeted; others are not; and Sassou Nguesso seldom targets leaders of large parties a second or third time. Rather, the effect of party size is conditional on the party's concentration. Leaders of small, heterogeneous parties, Figure 7.2 makes clear, stand virtually no chance of receiving a ministerial portfolio. As the size of their parties increases – and as their parties are more ethnically homogenous, more cohesive – the probability of being targeted for an electoral alliance increases rapidly. The fifth and sixth columns of Figure 7.2 provide even more evidence of Sassou Nguesso's strategy. Leaders of mid-sized, moderately diverse parties that are undermined by ongoing splinter movements or leadership struggles are extremely unlikely to be targeted for ministerial portfolios. Parties that are whole – free from leadership struggles and splinter movements of frustrated party dissidents – are much more attractive.

These electoral alliances have dramatic effects on party behavior. Figure 7.3 presents the number of times that officials of the six opposition parties discussed above have criticized Sassou Nguesso

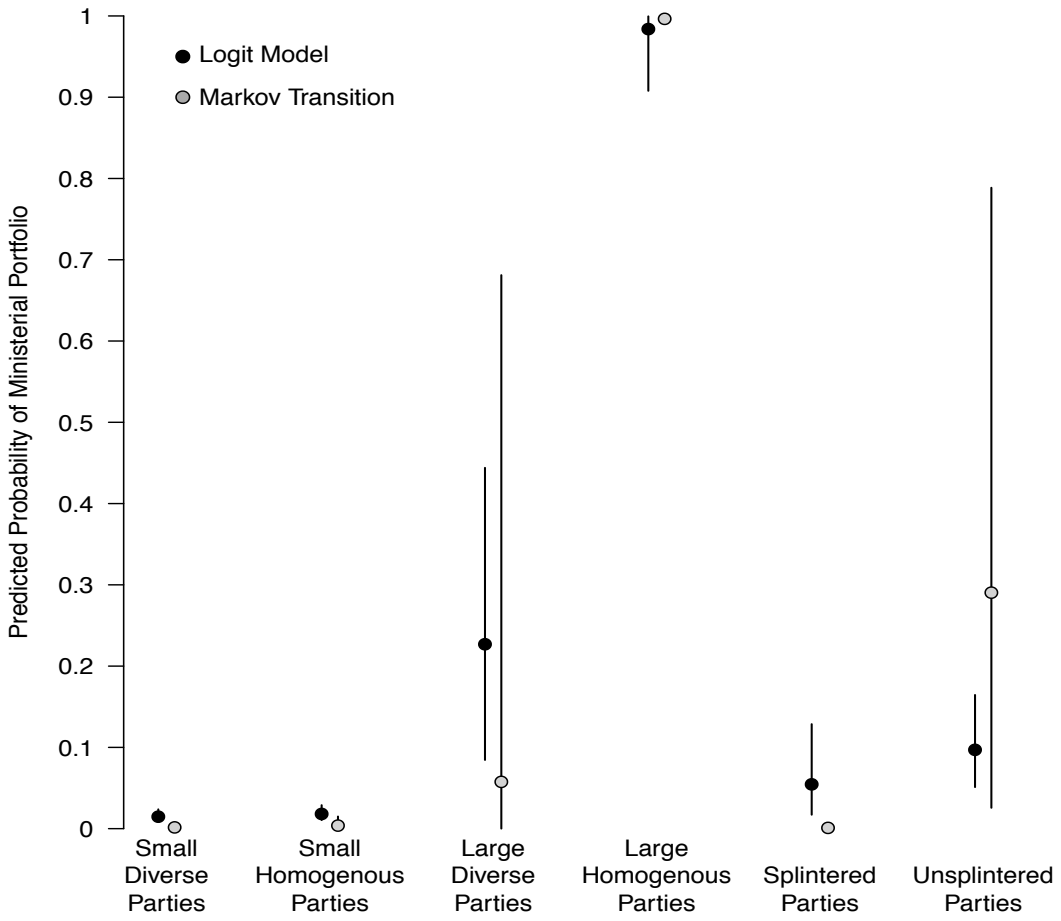

Figure 7.2: Determinants of Opposition Electoral Alliances.

since 1997; the dotted line represents the number of particularly severe criticisms, usually those that accuse Sassou Nguesso of graft and tyranny. The vertical lines give the year in which party *k* received a ministerial post in a Sassou Nguesso government, while the vertical dashed lines give the year in which party *k* departed a Sassou Nguesso government. Upon accepting electoral alliances in 2005 and 2008, respectively, MCDDI and RDD officials curtailed their anti-regime rhetoric. Gone were the routine accusations of electoral fraud and oil revenue theft. Whatever their private feelings –

many continued to impugn the regime in private conversation – senior party officials voiced only support publicly. Likewise, UPRN and RDPS party leaders only resumed government criticism after being dismissed from the government. UPADS and UDR Mwinda were the only two parties discussed above whose leaders never officially accepted electoral alliances, and their senior party officials behaved accordingly.

At the heart of this strategy lies two paradoxes, however. First, when Sassou Nguesso and other autocrats most need electoral alliances with opposition parties, their leaders have few incentives to accept them. Why save an autocrat who may soon lose power? Conversely, when opposition parties are most keen to accept an alliance with the autocrat – when doing so is their only realistic chance for wealth – autocrats should have few incentives to go along. Second, Sassou Nguesso and his counterparts must persuade prospective opposition allies that their endorsements will not be in vain: that even though they lose credibility when they endorse the regime they once impugned, Sassou Nguesso will not immediately dismiss them. In short, our logic tells us that electoral alliances should be far less common than they are.

To identify the conditions under which these electoral alliances emerge, I turn again to game theory.

7.2 A Theory of Electoral Alliances with Opposition Parties

7.2.1 Environment

Consider an election in which an autocrat D and opposition politician m compete for the votes of citizens. A representative citizen i has utility function $u_i(\cdot)$, which depends on post-election public goods $y \geq 0$ from the elected politician and a parameter ε that reflects some preference for opposi-

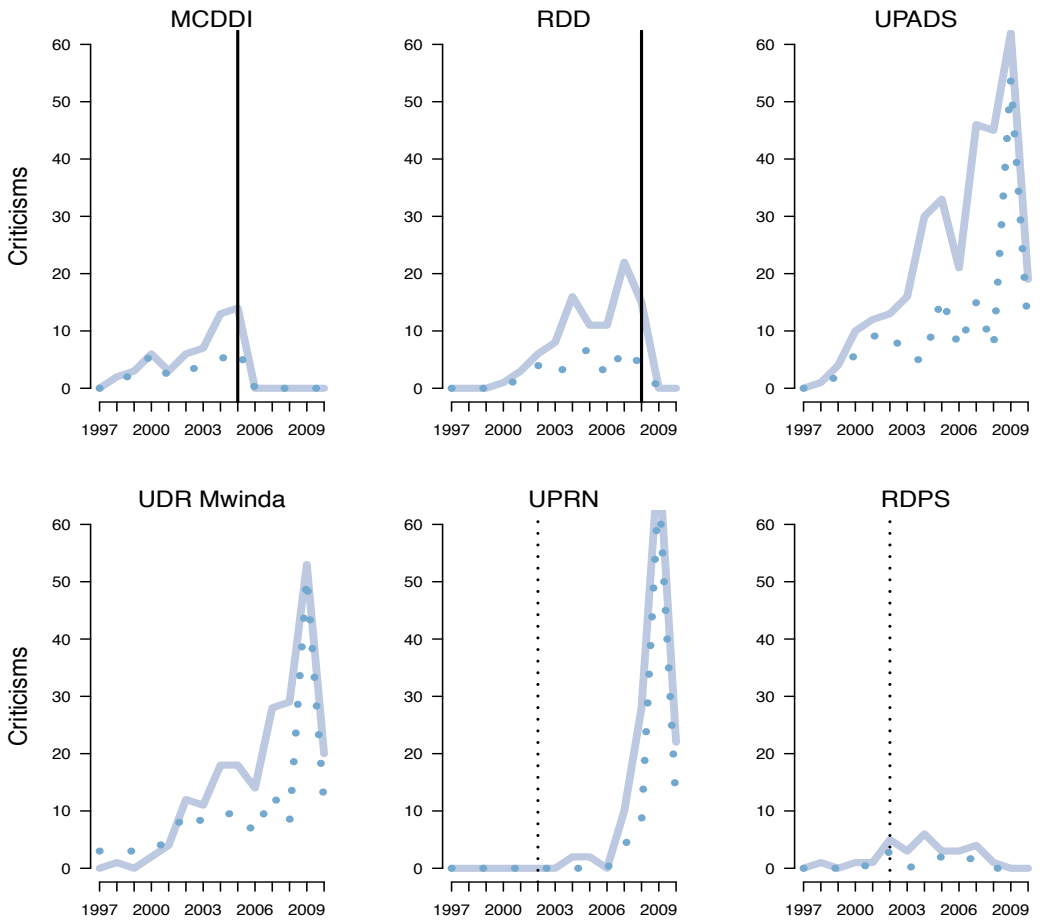

Figure 7.3: The number of times per year that party officials in six major political parties criticized Sassou Nguesso, as reported in *La Semaine Africaine*. The dotted line represents the number of particularly severe criticisms, usually those that accuse Sassou Nguesso of graft and tyranny. The vertical lines give the year in which party k received a ministerial post in a Sassou Nguesso government, while the vertical dashed lines give the year in which party k departed a Sassou Nguesso government. In many cases, party criticism spikes during the 2009 presidential election campaign.

tion politician m in the larger population. Individual utility can then be expressed as

$$u_i(\cdot) = \begin{cases} y_m + \varepsilon & \text{if opposition politician } m \text{ is elected} \\ y_D & \text{if the autocrat } D \text{ is elected} \end{cases}$$

Although citizens know their underlying partisan preference ε, the autocrat D and opposition politician m do not. Rather, they know only its distribution in the population:

$$\varepsilon \sim \text{Unif}\left[-\frac{1}{2\varphi}, \frac{1}{2\varphi}\right] \tag{7.1}$$

where $\varphi > 1$ reflects the certainty of their expectation. As φ increases, the autocrat and opposition politician m are more certain about their expectation of ε.

Since the autocrat organizes the election, he can set the amount of electoral fraud $f \geq 0$. I assume electoral fraud is costless until some amount $\mu \geq 0$; if the autocrat sets $f > \mu$, he is removed from power either by the international community or the population. The autocrat wins the election if

$$y_D + f \geq y_m + \varepsilon \tag{7.2}$$

Electoral fraud f and post-election public goods y_D are substitutes. Increasing fraud enables the autocrat to reduce public good spending.

If the autocrat wins the election, there is some probability ϱ that a popular protest movement coalesces around politician m and forces the autocrat from power. For simplicity, I assume this probability is exogenous. It may be a function of the autocrat's unpopularity or his control over the security forces. In turn, the autocrat survives a popular uprising with probability $1 - \varrho$.

Prior to the election the autocrat can promise politician m some post-election transfer t. This transfer, if sufficiently large, has three effects. First, the transfer ensures opposition politician m endorses the autocrat. As a result, the autocrat faces no competition and wins the election with certainty. Second, the transfer reduces the probability of a post-election popular protest to $\underline{\varrho} < \varrho$. For by endorsing the autocrat, opposition politician k is no longer regarded by the population as a credible protest leader. And since collective action generally requires a credible leader to mobilize, the

probability of successful collective action falls as well. Third, since the financial transfers required to secure opposition electoral alliances diminish the autocrat's ability to reward longtime regime insiders, there is some probability $1 - \vartheta$ that regime insiders remove him from power after the opposition electoral alliance is concluded.

The autocrat's expected utility thus depends on both the electoral outcome and his ability to weather any subsequent attempts to remove him from power:

$$E\left[u_D\left(\cdot\right)\right] = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if the autocrat loses the election or is deposed following electoral victory} \\ R - y_D & \text{if the autocrat is elected and retains power} \end{cases}$$

The timing of the game is visualized in Figure 7.4.

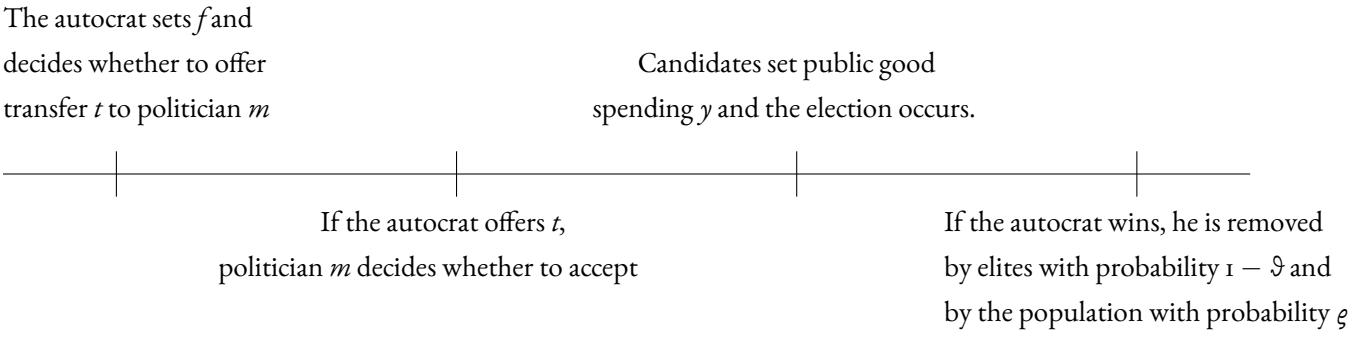

Figure 7.4: Timing of the electoral alliance game.

7.2.2 Results

The results are summarized in Proposition 5.

Proposition 5. *The outcome depends on the maximal level of fraud μ.*

1. *When* $\mu > 3\left(R - \frac{1}{2}\right)$, *the electoral equilibrium is*

$$\begin{aligned} y_D^* &= 0 \\ y_m^* &= R \\ Pr_D^*(Wins) &= 1 \end{aligned}$$

The autocrat co-opts party m if

$$R\left(\varrho - \underline{\varrho}\right) \geq \frac{\varrho}{4\vartheta\varphi}$$

and provides transfer

$$t^* = \frac{\varrho}{4\varphi\vartheta\left(1 - \underline{\varrho}\right)}$$

2. *When* $\mu \in \left[\frac{3}{2}, 3\left(R - \frac{1}{2}\right)\right]$, *the electoral equilibrium is*

$$\begin{aligned} y_D^* &= R - \frac{\mu}{3} - \frac{1}{2\varphi} \\ y_m^* &= R \\ Pr_D^*(Wins) &= 1 \end{aligned}$$

The autocrat co-opts party m if

$$R\left(1 - \underline{\varrho}\right) \geq \frac{\varrho}{4\varphi\vartheta} + (1 - \varrho)\left(\frac{\mu}{3} + \frac{1}{2\varphi}\right)$$

and provides transfer

$$t^* = \frac{\varrho}{4\varphi\vartheta\left(1-\underline{\varrho}\right)}$$

3. *When* $\mu < \frac{3}{2}$*, the electoral equilibrium is*

$$\begin{aligned} y_D^* &= R - \frac{\mu}{3} - \frac{1}{2\varphi} \\ y_m^* &= R + \frac{\mu}{3} - \frac{1}{2\varphi} \\ Pr_D^*(Wins) &= \frac{1}{2} + \frac{\varphi\mu}{3} \end{aligned}$$

The autocrat co-opts party m if

$$R\left(1-\underline{\varrho}\right) \geq \frac{\varrho}{4\varphi\vartheta} + (1-\varrho)\left(\frac{\mu}{3} + \frac{1}{4\varphi} + \frac{\varphi\mu^2}{9}\right) + \frac{1}{\vartheta}\left(\frac{1}{4\varphi} - \frac{\mu}{3} + \frac{\varphi\mu^2}{9}\right)$$

and provides transfer

$$t^* = \frac{1}{\vartheta\left(1-\underline{\varrho}\right)}\left(\frac{1+\varrho}{4\varphi} - \frac{\mu}{3} + \frac{\varphi\mu^2}{9}\right)$$

When autocrats have no recourse to fraud, Proposition 5.3 makes clear, electoral competition drives up public good commitments. At the limit where $\mu = 0$, in equilibrium both the autocrat and opposition set the same spending levels $y_m^* = y_D^* = R - \frac{1}{2}$, and as a result both derive the same probability of victory $\frac{1}{2}$. Opposition politician *m* requires transfer

$$t^* = \frac{1+\varrho}{4\vartheta\varphi\left(1-\underline{\varrho}\right)}$$

to form an electoral alliance with the autocrat. This amount is potentially high, especially if the autocrat is vulnerable to a *coup d'état* ($\vartheta \to 0$) or if the probability of post-election protests is relatively high ($\varrho \to 1$). As the autocrat's interest in electoral alliances with the opposition rises, the opposition becomes far less likely to accept them. Indeed, state revenue R must be extremely high – and the probability of a post-election protest with politician m in the coalition $\underline{\varrho}$ extremely low – for the autocrat to afford politician m's reservation price:

$$R\left(1-\underline{\varrho}\right) \geq \frac{\varrho}{4\varphi\vartheta}+\frac{1}{4\varphi}\left(1-\varrho+\frac{1}{\vartheta}\right)$$

These dynamics change dramatically when the autocrat can guarantee victory with fraud. From equation (7.2), electoral fraud increases the autocrat's probability of victory without reducing his returns from power. Since electoral fraud is costless as long as $f^* \leq \mu$, the autocrat sets it maximally before offering costly public goods to attract voters. If the autocrat can simply steal the election, Proposition 5.1 suggests, he has no incentive to provide *any* public goods. Since the opposition politician has no chance of claiming power outside of a popular uprising, he requires only what he expects from democracy

$$\begin{aligned} E\left[u_m\left(\text{Democracy}\right)\right] &= \Pr\left(\text{Victory}|\mu=0\right)\times\left(R-y_m^*|\mu=0\right) \\ &= \frac{1}{4\varphi} \end{aligned}$$

discounted by the probability of a post-election uprising ϱ, but amplified by the probability that the autocrat loses power to an elite *coup d'état* $(1-\vartheta)$ or post-election popular uprising $\underline{\varrho}$ that targets politician m as well.

When the autocrat can secure victory with fraud, the transfer that politician m requires for an

electoral alliance is *less than half* than when the autocrat lacks access to fraud:

$$t^* = \frac{\varrho}{4\vartheta\varphi\left(1-\underline{\varrho}\right)}$$

Autocrats who can secure victory with fraud, moreover, are likely to be viewed by opposition politicians as more insulated from *coups d'état* and less vulnerable to popular uprisings, either without (ϱ) or with ($\underline{\varrho}$) his participation in the regime. These beliefs, Proposition 5 tells us, are crucial. For they reduce the required transfer t^* that the opposition politician demands for the alliance. With no route to political power outside the autocrat's regime, politician m is forced to accept whatever offer the autocrat makes. This explains why the Congolese opposition accepts such inconsequential and poorly financed ministerial portfolios. It simply lacks leverage for anything better.

In this case, the autocrat chooses the electoral alliance whenever

$$R\left(\varrho-\underline{\varrho}\right) \geq \frac{\varrho}{4\vartheta\varphi}$$

This elucidates the chief result of Proposition 5, as well as Sassou Nguesso's alliance choices. When an electoral alliance has little effect on the probability of post-election popular uprisings – that is, when $\underline{\varrho} \to \varrho$ – the autocrat will *never* form an alliance, even when the opposition is virtually desperate to do so. As $\varrho - \underline{\varrho} \to 1$, however, the autocrat behaves entirely differently. In this case, even though the election could simply be stolen, the autocrat will bear considerable cost to ensure opposition politician m joins the regime.

In short, electoral alliances with opposition parties in autocracies serve to prevent popular protests – to render collective action difficult – not to win elections. If an autocrat must a single opposition politician among several, he selects the one who mobilizes collective action most effectively.

7.3 The Fate of the Political Opposition

Sassou Nguesso targets leaders of the largest, most ethically homogenous political parties for electoral alliances. He does so, Proposition 5 explains, to diminish the probability of popular uprisings by removing the key focal points for collective action. By joining the regime they once impugned, opposition leaders trade public credibility for several years of ministerial perquisites. Why, Congolese citizens ask themselves, follow venal opposition leaders into a potentially fatal protest when they will prove as corrupt as Sassou Nguesso? Why sacrifice so much for someone so untrustworthy?

7.3.1 The Effect of Ministerial Posts on Party Cohesion

Proposition 5 compels us to examine the fates of opposition leaders *after* they accept an electoral alliance. For the theory's chief observable implication is that, once these alliances are formed, onetime opposition leaders should have little credibility with their former constituents.

The narratives in Section 7.1 suggest this is indeed the case. Virtually all Congolese citizens say "there is no true political opposition here."[61] Of course, this is simply false. Just after the 2009 presidential elections, for instance, Mathias Dzon asked rhetorically:

> What are we going to pompously celebrate on August 15, 2010, [the 50th anniversary of our independence from France]? The misery of the Congolese people or the colossal fortunes of its leaders?[62]

After his return from exile in 2001, Jean Michel Bokamba Yangoumba – whose daughter was killed aboard UTA flight 772, from Chapter 2 – called for a series of electoral boycotts due to widespread

[61] Interviews with Anatole Milandou, Francois Sita, Milan Moïse, Auguste Nkembo, Felix Batantou, Christine Sita, and Anne Sita, which occurred by 24 July 2009 and 3 August 2012.

[62] *La Semaine Africaine*, 11 February 2010.

fraud and criticized Sassou Nguesso's management of the oil sector. What Congolese citizens mean, rather, is that few opposition leaders have resisted Sassou Nguesso's invitations. Indeed, many actively seek them. Bokamba Yangouma went on to endorse Sassou Nguesso during the 2009 presidential election, even without receiving a ministerial portfolio: "God has spoken; let us listen to him; let us put his words into action."[63] Opposition leaders know these reversals cost them credibility. "Sassou Nguesso creates alliances with opposition parties," a senior aide to Yhombi-Opango conceded, "to liquidate them."[64]

Measuring the effect of ministerial appointments on the credibility of opposition leaders is difficult for two reasons. First, since elections are fraudulent and there are no public opinion polls, ascertaining a party's true level of public support is virtually impossible. Second, since Sassou Nguesso remains in power, parties that recently received ministerial posts may have not yet suffered popularity losses. This phenomenon is known as "right censoring." Although we observe all political parties at the outset of Sassou Nguesso's return to power, we do not observe their condition at its end.

To measure the credibility of opposition party leaders, I record all instances in which party m suffered a leadership struggle or generated a splinter party of frustrated dissidents. In Congo, these party divisions are evidence of major disputes over party policy, and they emerge most commonly when the party's leadership alienates its rank and file. I then estimate the effect of ministerial appointments on party divisions with a Cox proportional hazard model, controlling for a variety of party-level factors: its size, ethnic homogeneity, and whether the party's founder was alive in year t. As a robustness check, I also employ a matching estimator, which accommodates the fact that Sassou Nguesso targets opposition parties strategically. Because he does so, parties that receive ministerial posts – "treated" parties, in the lexicon of causal inference – are systematically different than parties that do not. If these systematic differences also render them more likely to splinter, the results

[63] *La Semaine Africaine*, 30 January 2009.
[64] Interview with Guy Mafimba, 14 May 2012. See Section 7.1 for the full quote.

from the Cox proportional hazards model will be biased. This matching estimator uses the results from Table 7.1 to pair parties that are similar in all respects save whether they received a ministerial portfolio from Sassou Nguesso.

The results appear in Table 7.2. By far the greatest predictor of leadership struggles within – or splinter parties from – opposition parties is whether they occupied a ministerial post. The effect is substantively and statistically significant. Occupying a ministerial post in a given year increases the chances of party division by some 46%. Figure 7.5 illustrates this. Left to themselves, Congo's opposition parties are relatively immune from divisions. Once they accept a ministerial portfolios, however, they quickly suffer from leadership struggles or generate splinter parties of dissidents. Indeed, eight years after accepting a post, a co-opted opposition party will almost certainly have been undermined by some sort of division. Column 2 affirms that this is not simply because opposition parties targeted by alliances are fundamentally different. They are; indeed, the matching estimator finds only nine parties in the treatment and control groups that are comparable. But occupying a ministerial post still increases the probability of party division. Given the few comparable observations, the effect is imprecisely estimated.

7.3.2 The Determinants of Opposition Ministerial Tenure

These results suggest a final challenge for Sassou Nguesso and his counterparts. Erstwhile opposition leaders begin losing public credibility the moment they accept electoral alliances. Yet the financial returns from ministerial portfolios accrue over time. Ministerial budgets, that is, can only be siphoned slowly. In the lexicon of political economy, autocrats confront a "commitment problem." For the strategy to prove successful, Sassou Nguesso must commit to his opposition party targets *not* to remove them from the government immediately after they join, well before they have fully indulged in the perquisites of ministerial power. In short, Sassou Nguesso requires a commitment device to render the strategy feasible.

Table 7.2: The effect of ministerial portfolios on party divisions

	Party Division Cox Model	Party Division Matching Estimator
Ministerial Posts	3.834**	1.413†
	(1.342)	(1.114)
Seats1993	0.126**	
	(0.059)	
Seats1993× Party Concentration	-0.000	
	(0.001)	
Founder Alive	0.382	
	(1.821)	
Year Fixed Effects/Frailty Term	Yes	Yes
N	960	9
Significance levels: †† : 20% † : 10% * : 5% ** : 1%		

With no institutional commitment device – Sassou Nguesso alone appoints and terminates ministers at will – Sassou Nguesso relies on his reputation. By establishing a history of retaining opposition ministers for a fixed number of years, regardless of when the parties ruptured, Sassou Nguesso can credibly promise to honor his commitments to opposition party leaders. Figure 7.6 displays the empirical distribution of opposition ministerial tenure. In short, there is very little variation in opposition ministerial tenure itself. Once they join the government, opposition leaders are essentially guaranteed between four and six years in the government. Within this narrow band, however, Sassou Nguesso allocates tenure strategically. Table 7.3 suggests that ministers that represent divided opposition parties are indeed more likely to be removed – approximately 25% so per year – than the ministers of undivided opposition parties.

7.4 Conclusion

Modern African autocrats are far more concerned about popular uprisings than their predecessors. By insisting on regular elections – however fraudulent – as a condition for aid, investment, and debt

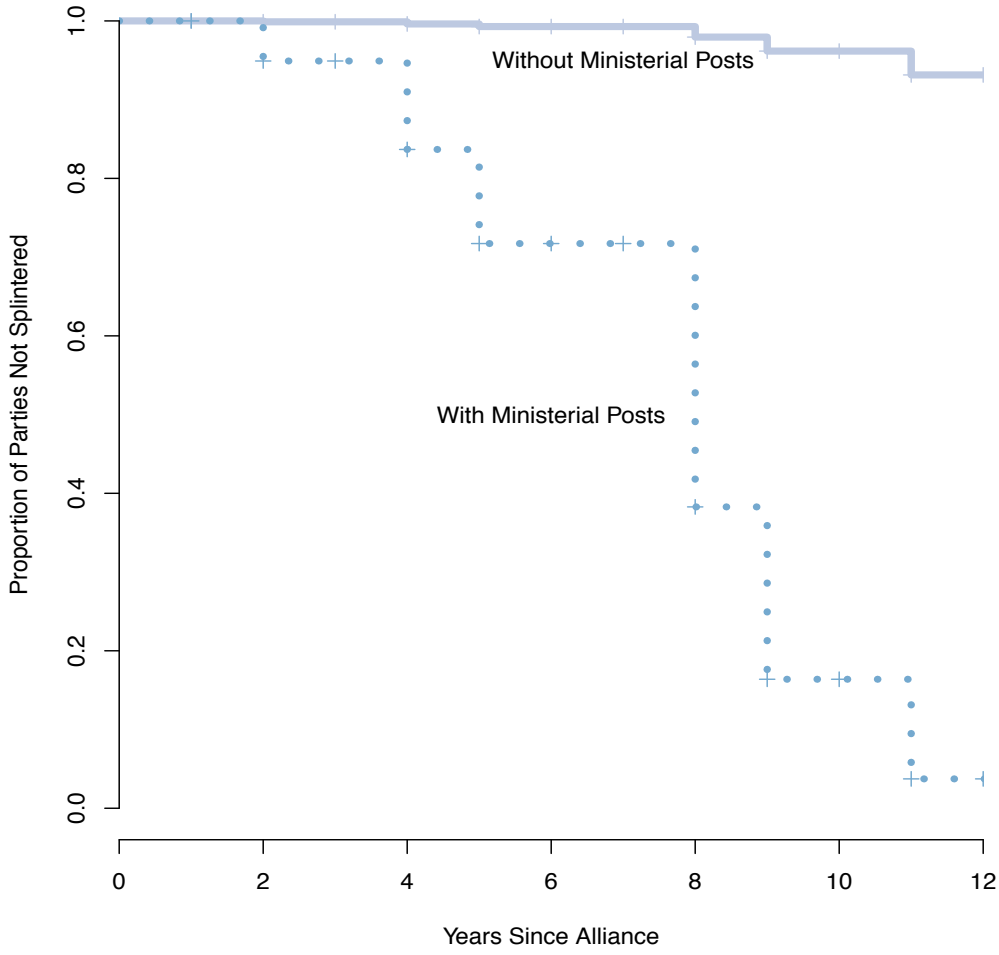

Figure 7.5: Determinants of Opposition Party Division.

relief, the international community creates "focal moments," when citizens are engaged in the political process and aware of shared discontent. Since they believe that international attention will shield them from repression, opposition leaders are keen to mobilize unrest. As a result, Africa's autocrats are far more likely to lose power during election years – executive and legislative alike – than ever before. To prevent frustration from coalescing into open revolt, this chapter finds, Sassou Nguesso fashions electoral alliances with opposition leaders. The technique has little to do with winning elec-

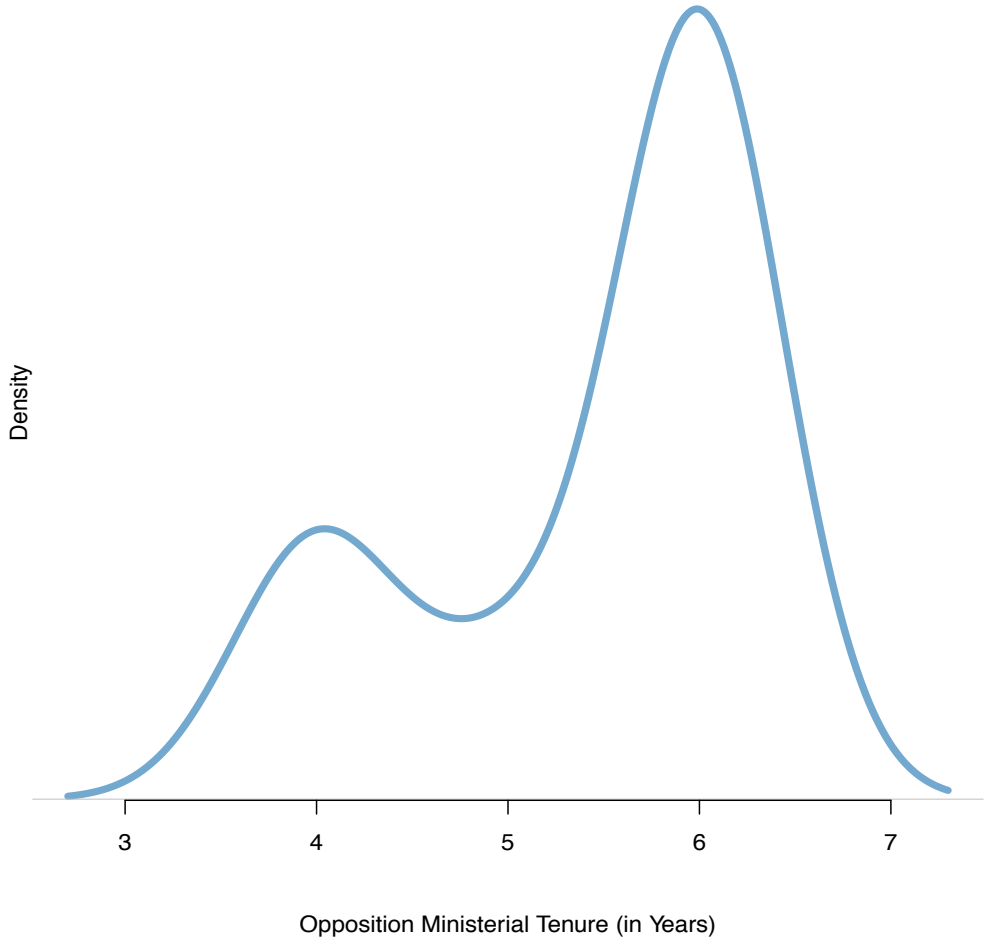

Figure 7.6: The empirical distribution of ministerial tenure for opposition leaders

tions. For Sassou Nguesso can guarantee victory with fraud and, once former opposition leaders have endorsed him, they lose their ability to deliver votes. Rather, by joining the regime they once impugned, opposition leaders sacrifice public credibility for ministerial perquisites, and they lose their capacity to mobilize unrest. Financial resources are critical for this. But so too are the expectations of opposition leaders. When they believe the autocrat is vulnerable, they have few incentives to save him, and so their consciences are more costly to purchase. When opposition leaders are per-

Table 7.3: The effect of party divisions on the tenure of opposition ministers

	Opposition Tenure Cox Model
Party Division	3.211†
	(1.837)
Seats1993	0.102†
	(0.077)
Seats1993$\times$ Party Concentration	-0.003*
	(0.001)
Founder Alive	0.092
	(1.431)
Year Fixed Effects/Frailty Term	Yes
N	49
Significance levels: †† : 20% † : 10% $*$: 5% $**$: 1%	

suaded that the autocrat is strong – that fortune and relevance are accessibly only within the regime – the price of their endorsement declines rapidly.

But as events would soon make clear, uprisings can emerge spontaneously. However extensive his opposition alliances – however robbed frustrated citizens are of leaders to coordinate unrest – popular demobilization is no substitute for popular goodwill, or the appearance thereof. Chapter 8 documents Sassou Nguesso's efforts to acquire it.

8

Electoral Competition and Popular Mobilization, 2007-2012

So it is your work to whet their souls, for it belongs to the ruler not only to make himself good, but he must also take care that those he rules will be as good as possible.

– Xenophon, *The Education of Cyrus*

When Jean-Pierre Thystère-Tchicaya died in a Paris hospital on June 20, 2008, he was virtually lionized by the political class. At 72 years old, his career spanned nearly four decades. He served as Minister of Higher Education under Marien Ngouabi, facilitated Sassou Nguesso's *de jure coup d'état* against Jacques Joachim in February 1977, spent much of the 1980s under house arrest at Sassou Nguesso's order, emerged as Pointe-Noire's favorite son during the 1990s, and then ascended to the presidency of the National Assembly in 2002 following his alliance with Sassou Nguesso. Isidore Mvouba, Sassou Nguesso's appointed prime minister, eulogized Thystère-Tchicaya as a "great statesman" and "worthy son of Congo." The late *Ponténégrin* "had always shown great consistency in his commitment," Mvouba declared, "to the values of the Republic and democracy."[1]

Although Thystère-Tchicaya's alliance with Sassou Nguesso virtually ended his political career, his death sparked widespread mourning in Pointe-Noire. It also awoke the long simmering frustrations of the city's poor. Along with Sassou Nguesso, First Lady Antoinette, and a handful of government ministers, Thystère-Tchicaya's remains arrived in Pointe-Noire on Saturday morning, July 5. That afternoon the regime announced that Monday's public memorial would be held at the Franco Anselmi Stadium, a recently rehabilitated facility far smaller than the original site. If attendance was restricted, the regime figured, public mourning was less likely to coalesce into revolt. Thousands of young *Ponténégrins* turned up for the Monday ceremony anyway and were denied entry. When Sassou Nguesso's motorcade attempted to exit the stadium afterwards, Thystère-Tchicaya's angry supporters blocked their exit, hurling stones and insults at the car. Sassou Nguesso's motorcade was forced from the funeral procession to Thystère-Tchicaya's ultimate resting place. But few *Ponténégrins* actually knew this. And so as the procession proceeded through the city to the family cemetery, angry *Ponténégrins* pelted the motorcade with stones, set aflame cars in adjacent parking lots, and vandalize area businesses. The security services arrested at least 35 people, many of whose crimes consisted only of wearing Thystère-Tchicaya reelection t-shirts. Many were tortured and one died in

[1] *La Semaine Africaine*, 8 July 2008.

custody. One journalist for *Télé pour Tous*, the country's only independent television news channel, was detained for allowing guests to defend the rioters.[2]

Sassou Nguesso employs electoral alliances, Chapter 7 makes clear, to discredit opposition leaders. But the Pointe-Noire riots underscored the importance of popular goodwill, however minimal. For popular uprisings can emerge spontaneously, and some amount of popular goodwill is useful for preventing them. With the electoral season upon him, Sassou Nguesso had to figure out how to generate it.

Generating goodwill is no trivial task for Sassou Nguesso. No southerner will forgive the atrocities that followed Sassou Nguesso's seizure of power, just as no citizen who does not directly benefit from the regime will forgive its corruption. Indeed, fresh allegations of corruption were still emerging. On July 28, just after the Pointe-Noire riots, *Talassa* reported that Xavier Harel, a French journalist who two years earlier had written a book about financial improprieties among Africa's autocrats, claimed Sassou Nguesso's fortune was roughly $1 billion.[3] Five weeks later, *Talassa* published Jean François Probst's claim that Sassou Nguesso purchased a $40 million mansion in Marbella, Spain, the site of his three week August vacations.[4] Bruno Jacquet Ossèbi, the courageous human rights activist from Chapter 1, was violently murdered just six months later. The upcoming elections rendered these reports all the more threatening.

To generate goodwill, this chapter finds, Sassou Nguesso turned to surrogates. During the 2007 legislative elections he deployed trusted aides to create their own political parties, which were permanently allied to his PCT but apart from it. Indeed, Sassou Nguesso even financed many of them. "Our only reason for being," son Denis Christel proclaimed of his *Pôle des jeunes républicaines* (PJR), "is to support the actions of President Denis Sassou Nguesso."[5] Section 8.1 documents Sas-

[2] Though undisputed, this account is taken from a press release by the *Rencontre pour la paix et les droits de l'homme* and *Commission justice et paix*, two human rights NGOs in Pointe-Noire.

[3] *Talassa*, 28 July 2008.

[4] *Talassa*, 5 September 2008.

[5] *La Semaine Africaine*, 13 April 2007.

sou Nguesso's decision, as well as the ensuing 2007 legislative election. In many districts, the candidates fielded by these loyalist parties competed against the opposition and *each other*. The elections between loyalist candidates were generally fair and extremely competitive. Since they espoused the same platform, loyalist electoral campaigns became contests in gift giving, with the candidates always careful to refract praise from their constituents to Sassou Nguesso. The elections were not simply organized to locate pockets of popular dissent, as scholars have observed elsewhere [70, 54, 29]. For that, the government funds a massive intelligence gathering apparatus, documented in Chapter 9, and civil war fault lines anyway remained a reliable indicator.

Section 8.2 explores legislative elections with the aid of a game theoretic model. It suggests that electoral campaigns enable candidates to build patronage networks that generate popular goodwill. Insofar as they rival the autocrat's, these patronage networks are potentially dangerous. As Schatzberg [159] wrote of Mobutu Sese Seko,

> It is customary for the [intelligence service] to file regular reports on the activities of all members of the National Legislative Council when they are in their constituencies during periods of parliamentary recess. These reports indicate not only where legislators are, but also what they are doing and whether they are behaving.

When fixing the terms of electoral competition, the model suggests, autocrats are cognizant of these risks. When the autocrat believes his blessing is more important for a politician's career advancement than popular support, the autocrat allows his loyalists to accumulate it; this goodwill creates a veneer of popular support for the autocrat, which renders popular uprisings less likely. By contrast, when popular support is more useful to elite career advancement than the autocrat's blessing, the autocrat organizes elections in which the loyalist candidate's victory is guaranteed with fraud. With fewer incentives to generate popular support, the loyalist candidate ultimately wins the election with much less goodwill. Drawing on qualitative and quantitative evidence, Section 8.3 shows that during the

legislative elections of 2002 and 2012, when Sassou Nguesso was less confident of his surrogates' loyalty, he set electoral rules that diminished loyalist competition and the popular goodwill his surrogates accrued. Section 8.3 also suggests that Sassou Nguesso's interest in loyalist competition is much stronger in locales where he needs popular goodwill most acutely: the south.

8.1 Competition, Control, and the Legislative Elections of 2007

8.1.1 The Competitors

The 2007 legislative elections were contested by three blocs. The enfeebled opposition created the *Alliance pour une nouvelle république*, an umbrella group of some 16 parties headlined by Lissouba's UPADS, Milongo's UDR Mwinda, and Yhombi-Opango's RDD. They remained as stridently opposed to the regime as ever. They coordinated their organizations. UPADS candidates ran mostly in the southern regions of Niari, Bouenza, and Lékoumou; UDR Mwinda candidates focused on Pool and southern Brazzaville, and the RDD fielded candidates throughout the northern regions. They called "for an end to political exclusion and the ruling clan's illicit enrichment,"[6] and accused the regime of "pillaging national resources."[7]

The second bloc consisted of a handful of onetime opposition parties, the leaders of which were given lucrative – though politically irrelevant – ministerial portfolios in exchange for endorsing Sassou Nguesso. Detailed in Chapter 7, in 2007 this bloc consisted of two parties: Jean-Pierre Thystère-Tchicaya's RDPS, which dominated Pointe-Noire and much of the Kouilou region, and Bernard Kolélas' MCDDI, which dominated the Pool region surrounding Brazzaville. Though discredited in the eyes of their constituents, their alliances with Sassou Nguesso guaranteed a handful of seats in the National Assembly.

[6] *La Semaine Africaine*, 15 May 2007.
[7] *La Semaine Africaine*, 25 May 2007.

The years prior to the 2007 legislative elections had been very good to Sassou Nguesso. Between 2005 and 2007, one watchdog organization alleged that "Congo's leaders forgot to transfer to the public treasury €750 million of oil revenue."[8] Sassou Nguesso used a portion of these proceeds to finance satellite parties. Permanently allied to the PCT, they formed the *majorité présidentielle*, a collection of more than 40 parties and associations "that call Sassou Nguesso their own."[9] This group constituted the third bloc of parties that waged the 2007 legislative elections. In 2001 Wilfried was the only of Sassou Nguesso's sons and nephews to preside over a political party, the *Club 2002*. Founded in 1990 as the national shipping company, SOCOTRAM receives royalties of $2 per ton of oil; it was transferred to Wilfried in 1997, making him one of Congo's richest men [77]. By 2007 three other sons and nephews oversaw their very own political parties: son Denis Christel presided over his PJR, nephew Edgard over his *Agir pour le Congo* (APC), and nephew René Serge Blanchard Oba over his *Mouvement pour la solidarité et le développement* (MSD). Each recruited prominent ministers in Sassou Nguesso's government and fielded candidates in dozens of electoral districts. That Sassou Nguesso financed these parties was an open secret [131]. "If almost every member of the government is a candidate in the upcoming elections," *La Semaine Africaine* editorialized, "it's not by mistake."[10] A prominent government minister confirmed this to me even more directly. "[Sassou Nguesso] wants politicians to focus their energies on electoral competition. He wants them to compete against each other."[11]

These parties espoused virtually identical campaign platforms, remarkable only for their lack of ideological content. Just as Denis Christel described the PJR's party's "only reason for being," Wilfried later declared of his Club 2002:

> The Club 2002 PUR pledges its tireless support to His Excellence Denis Sassou Nguesso,

[8] *La Semaine Africaine*, 20 April 2007.
[9] *La Semaine Africaine*, 8 May 2007.
[10] *La Semaine Africaine*, 15 June 2007.
[11] Interview with Anatole Collinet Makosso, 23 April 2012.

> President of the Republic, for his unceasing efforts to bring peace to both the country, the region, and the world. ...To this effect, the Club 2002 PUR reaffirms to him its ineluctable support and reassures him of its total and complete devotion.[12]

Sylvain Ngambolo founded the *Convention pour la république et la démocratie* (CRD) in April 2004. He did so

> in order to focus on maximizing its unwavering support for President Denis Sassou Nguesso ..., as well as to participate in the electoral competitions and defend the republic and democracy.[13]

Still another party, this one founded by Jean Ambvouli, described its mission thus:

> We created our party to contribute to the construction of Congo in peace and national unity, the creed dear to the President of the Republic Denis Sassou Nguesso.[14]

The 2007 legislative elections were waged essentially between sycophants, as the map in Figure 8.1 makes clear. For each region, it visualizes the proportion of electoral districts in which multiple loyalist candidates competed against each other. In three regions – Cuvette-Ouest, Kouilou, and Sangha – loyalist candidates competed against each other in *every* electoral district. In four other regions, more than half of all electoral districts witnessed loyalist competition. It was widespread.

8.1.2 Gift Giving, Personal Networks, and Sassou Nguesso

Loyalist competition was also costly. The presidential family inaugurated the "pre-campaign" season nearly three months before voting. On March 23 Antoinette Sassou Nguesso traveled via helicopter to Kinkala, Pool, a city less than 50 miles from Brazzaville. In the presence of two govern-

[12] *La Semaine Africaine*, 3 May 2012.
[13] *La Semaine Africaine*, 2 July 2011.
[14] *La Semaine Africaine*, 17 November 2005.

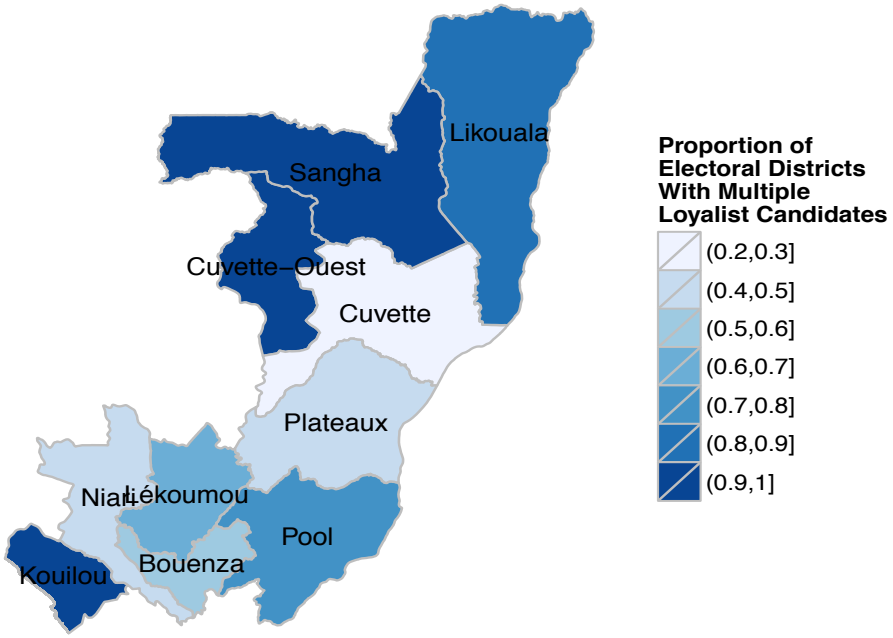

Figure 8.1: The proportion of electoral districts, by region, in which multiple loyalist candidates competed against each other in 2007.

ment ministers,[15] her *Fondation Congo Assistance* NGO gave medicine to a local hospital and a water purifier to a local neighborhood. Less than a week later, on March 29, Sassou Nguesso charged the Congolese Red Cross with distributing 2, 500 bottles of the family's brand of drinking water, Okiessi, to cholera patients at two Brazzaville hospitals. It remains unclear whether Sassou Nguesso

[15] The ministers were Jeanne Francoise Leckomba and Claude Alphonse Nsilou

required the Congolese Red Cross to pay for the privilege.[16]

These early gifts set the tone for the electoral campaign. With loyalist candidates espousing the same platform, their campaigns were essentially contests in gift-giving. Some donated tables and chairs to area schools.[17] Some gave hundreds of public trash cans.[18] Some gave medicine to local hospitals to treat HIV and cholera.[19] Some gave ambulances.[20] Some simply gave cash.[21] These gift-giving contests were evidence of competition. As one loyalist candidate said, in a moment of candor:

> Voters are tired. They don't really expect politicians to fulfill their campaign promises once in office. [Gift giving] enables us to earn credibility and loyalty from the population.[22]

Whatever the gift, the act itself generated real support for candidates. After Adolphe Mbou-Maba, the incumbent PCT deputy in one Brazzaville district, donated 72 trash cans, the neighborhood president professed fidelity to the candidate rather than Sassou Nguesso:

> With this gesture, the neighborhood promises its attachment to the person of deputy Mbou-Maba. ...This initiative is very good; it renders our neighborhood cleaner and more worthy of its name. ...We can only rejoice for this gift, made to our church, to our schools, and to the communities in our neighborhood.[23]

After two PCT candidates, Sylvestre Ossiala and Hyacinthe Ngani, distributed medicine to their Brazzaville districts, the neighborhood president responded equally profusely:

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[16] *La Semaine Africaine*, 3 April 2007.
[17] *La Semaine Africaine*, 17 April 2007.
[18] *La Semaine Africaine*, 6 April 2007.
[19] *La Semaine Africaine*, 8 May 2007.
[20] Interview with Guy Mafimba, 2 February 2012.
[21] Interview with Guy Richard Sibi, 7 July 2013.
[22] Interview with Marcel Moukoko and his campaign manager, 4 July 2013.
[23] *La Semaine Africaine*, 6 April 2007.

> The activities sponsored by [Ossiala and Ngani] aren't done behind closed doors. To realize them, one must have love for one's fellow man, which everyone here can witness: students, athletes, everyone. We know we can count on these two worthy sons of the neighborhood.[24]

Charlotte Opimbat, who spent the years since her 2002 loss building a personal constituency through her personal NGO, described a "contract" between her and her Brazzaville constituents:

> We simply had to launch a wide range of activities, notably in the domaines of sanitation, health, and the fight against HIV/AIDS and cholera. ...These actions are particularly relevant for the populations in our neighborhoods. As a result of all this, there is a sort of contract of trust between the population and me.[25]

Campaigning enabled well-funded loyalist candidates to create patronage networks among the population, which potentially rivaled Sassou Nguesso's.

Still, since they believed their career prospects depended on Sassou Nguesso's favor, loyalist candidates refracted the popular goodwill they acquired from gift-giving to Sassou Nguesso. Said the secretary general of Denis Christel's PJR, upon giving tables and chairs to a Brazzaville school:

> Since we started the PJR, with our honorary president, Denis Christel Sassou Nguesso, we decided that each time the population needed our help, we would provide it according to our means. It's one way for us to support *La Nouvelle Espérance*, the president's economic development project. The gifts we have just provided are very small, and what remains to be done is very great. To the voters who hold our destiny in their hands, we would like to remind you that ...we are part of the *majorité présidentielle*, supporting, strongly, the President of the Republic.[26]

[24] *La Semaine Africaine*, 4 May 2007.
[25] *La Semaine Africaine*, 8 May 2007.
[26] *La Semaine Africaine*, 17 April 2007.

Marcel Mbani, then Minister of Youth, choreographed his party's congress to ensure his supporters affirmed their unconditional support for Sassou Nguesso before they honored him. *La Semaine Africaine* described it this way:

> Party supporters adopted motions of support for president Denis Sassou Nguesso and Marcel Mbani, the president of their party. ...The participants, moreover, pledged their total support to *La Nouvelle Espérance*, President Denis Sassou Nguesso's economic development project. They promised to spare no effort to ensure it reaches fruition.[27]

At another event Sylvain Ngambolo declared himself "dedicated to an unwavering fidelity to President Denis Sassou Nguesso.[28] Occasionally candidates even appealed directly to Sassou Nguesso before their supporters. One candidate, Anguios Nganguia Engambé, opened a letter to his constituents this way:

> I will devote all my energy to the success of the *Mouvance Présidentielle* and to the defeat of the opposition. I have been, always and constantly, with the *Mouvance Présidentielle* for the great electoral contests. ...I put all my strength of conviction to be your spokesperson, the defender of your interests. ...I am the only candidate who brings people together, and who can ensure that Denis Sassou Nguesso receives 95% of the vote in 2009.[29]

Since Congolese citizens remained crushingly poor, even loyalist candidates had to acknowledge popular frustration. Yet with their political futures firmly in Sassou Nguesso's hands, they did so in ways that absolved him of responsibility. As one loyalist candidate, Georges Tsiba, put it:

[27] *La Semaine Africaine*, 4 May 2007.
[28] *La Semaine Africaine*, 13 April 2007.
[29] *La Semaine Africaine*, 6 April 2007.

> Now is the time to climb out of the mud pit in which certain of the country's citizens, corrupted by power, want to keep us. But we must leave the President of the Republic above the melée. We must not ask him to defend the indefensible, those to whom he gave the opportunity to construct the country and who have squandered it. Congo must be governed well.[30]

With loyalist candidates engaging in as much gift-giving as possible – and their insistent praise of Sassou Nguesso – citizens in even hostile electoral districts could be forgiven for overstating the extent of popular support for the regime. Indeed, virtually everyone who attended campaign rallies of loyalist candidates would chant *majorité présidentielle* slogans and leave wearing a *majorité présidentielle* shirt or hat. The most industrious of Sassou Nguesso's interlocutors succeeded in turning their new parties into genuine political machines. Although André Okombi Salissa was regarded as among the most rapacious government ministers, from his base in Lekana, Plateaux – which he won with 92% of the vote; he also controlled the area's only private radio station – his CADD-MJ soon emerged as Bouenza's most potent political force apart from UPADS. His "jobs policy" – his commitment to finding his young partisans work – had so endeared him to the community that his partisans dominated the regional council and, increasingly, National Assembly delegation. As one of his Bouenza disciples put it:

> I hate Denis Sassou Nguesso. I will never vote for the PCT. But André Okombi Salissa loves Bouenza, and I appreciate his jobs policy.[31]

The most populous southern and northern regions, respectively, Bouenza and Plateaux were arguably the most valuable prizes in the contest for popular support. Okombi Salissa effectively became the first northern politician to acquire a southern constituency. As long as Okombi Salissa

[30] *La Semaine Africaine*, 17 April 2007.
[31] Interview with Guy Richard Sibi, 14 May 2012.

used his personal constituency to buttress Sassou Nguesso, loyalist competition strengthened the regime.

With electoral fraud virtually costless, candidates knew that the only way to win a National Assembly seat was to join a loyalist party. So many did, even having fought against Sassou Nguesso in 1997. They were forced to campaign under his banner, even if they privately loathed him. A friend of one such candidate described his decision this way:

> Our friend hasn't forgotten his conditions. In his soul, he knows that he isn't with Denis Sassou Nguesso, that he'll always hate Denis Sassou Nguesso. But while Sassou Nguesso is strong, he pretends to support him. He has never forgotten our struggle. So if you see him with Sassou Nguesso and [Michel] Ngakala, it's *une grande pièce de théâtre*. ...He's just on good terms with the government for the moment.[32]

8.1.3 Voting

The first round of voting occurred on June 24 and, as most everyone expected, the opposition was subject to widespread fraud. Sassou Nguesso's allies dominated the new National Assembly. Of 137 seats, his loyalists controlled 122. The regime was so opposed to an independent electoral commission that it quietly dispatched Germain Céphas Ewangui – president of the regime's pseudo human rights NGO – to create the *Forum de la société civile pour les élections libres et transparentes*. Although Ewangui was sponsored by the regime, very few people knew. Hence his loud objections to the opposition's calls for an independent electoral commission created the appearance of reasoned disagreement, and confused voters.

La Semaine Africaine was so revolted by the electoral process that it asked in big, bold letters: "How can we be proud to be Congolese?"

[32] Interview with Marcel Moukoko, 8 July 2013.

> The first round of the legislative elections was merely an expression of political armed robbery, which cheated the laws of our country and scorned the democratic opposition. Never in Congo's history have we observed an election with so many irregularities. ...Our leaders aren't even embarrassed by what happened. ...Tomorrow, the government will hold its council of ministers and won't even evoke the elections but to congratulate itself on having held them, and life will continue on as normal.[33]

Emmanuel Ngouélondélé, a prominent opposition leader and father-in-law to a Sassou Nguesso daughter, declared on RFI:

> [These elections are] a shame for Congo, a shame for our democracy, if there is even democracy in our country. How, after 47 years of independence, can we tolerate this level of apparently legalized disorder? Is this not simply chaos? If [the government] had any humility, any honor, they would cancel the elections and install a genuinely independent electoral commission. This demands the resignation of the entire government, which must lay down its weapons.[34]

In response to the criticism, the two Interior Ministry bureaucrats ostensibly responsible for electoral organization were fired.[35]

Among loyalist candidates, however, voting was remarkably fair. Virtually all government ministers competed – they, the most favored of regime lieutenants – and some of Sassou Nguesso's favorites even lost. Alain Akouala Atipault, so appreciated for defending Sassou Nguesso against the Mandela Foundation, as discussed in Chapter 4, lost. Charles Zacharie Bowao, then Secretary General of the Government and later Defense Minister, lost. Sylvain Ngambolo, who had so studiously

[33] *La Semaine Africaine*, 26 June 2007.
[34] *La Semaine Africaine*, 29 June 2007.
[35] *La Semaine Africaine*, 29 June 2012.

directed the goodwill he received from his constituents to Sassou Nguesso, lost. Indeed, *five additional* government ministers lost as well.

Scholars often treat legislative elections in autocracies as either exercises in widespread fraud or careful attempts to locate pockets of dissent. In Congo they are neither. Forced by the international community to organize the 2007 legislative elections, Sassou Nguesso formulated his best response: widespread competition among loyalists, which enabled them to generate patronage networks that could one day rival his own. He even financed them. Why did he do so, particularly when the risks were so great? When should we expect autocrats to organize elections differently?

To probe the origins and mechanics of loyalist competition, I again employ game theory.

8.2 A Theory of Local Electoral Competition

8.2.1 Environment: A Single Loyalist Candidate

As a baseline for comparison, I first study an election between a loyalist candidate j and an opposition candidate m, who compete for the votes of citizens by credibly promising post-election transfers $y \geq 0$. The winner receives some amount ω of state revenue, set exogenously by the autocrat. Candidates' post-election transfers to voters are partially funded by the leaders of their respective parties. The autocrat funds share $\zeta_j \in (0, 1]$ of candidate j's post-election transfers, while opposition candidate m's party funds share $\zeta_m \in (0, 1]$ of his. In letting candidates compete over transfers, the model acknowledges the fact that, in Congo and elsewhere in autocratic Africa, the state provides few public goods. Voters in Congo hardly even expect them to.

A representative citizen i has utility function $u_i(\cdot)$, which depends on post-election transfers $y \geq 0$ from the elected politician and a parameter ε that reflects some societal bias against the autocrat – and hence the loyalist candidate – in the larger population. Individual utility can then be expressed

as

$$u_i(\cdot) = \begin{cases} y_m + \varepsilon & \text{if opposition politician } m \text{ is elected} \\ y_j & \text{if loyalist candidate } j \text{ is elected} \end{cases}$$

Although citizens know their underlying partisan preference ε, politicians do not. Rather, they know only its distribution in the population:

$$\varepsilon \sim \text{Unif}\left[-\frac{1}{2\varphi}, \frac{1}{2\varphi}\right]$$

where $\varphi > 0$ reflects the certainty of their expectation. As φ increases, politicians are more certain about their expectation of ε.

Since the autocrat organizes the election, he can set the amount of electoral fraud $f \geq 0$. As in Chapter 7, I assume electoral fraud is costless until some amount $\mu \geq 0$. If the autocrat sets $f > \mu$, he is removed from power either by the international community or the population. Loyalist candidate j wins the election if

$$y_j + f \geq y_m + \varepsilon \tag{8.1}$$

After the election, the winning politician receives some amount of popular goodwill g in proportion to his post-election transfers y. Since candidates' electoral campaigns are partially funded by their party leader – the autocrat partially funds candidate j, while candidate m is partially funded by an opposition party leader – I assume that the winning candidate's reserve of popular goodwill is discounted by $\varkappa \in [0, 1]$:

$$g = \varkappa y$$

As $\varkappa \to 1$, the winning candidate derives more popular goodwill from his post-electoral transfers.

Finally, I assume there is some probability ϱ that, following the election, the autocrat is vulnerable to a popular uprising led by his elite. I let beliefs about ϱ differ across candidates and the autocrat. If the autocrat is vulnerable, the elected politician leads a popular uprising against the autocrat, which succeeds with probability

$$\Pr\left(\text{Success}|\text{Vulnerable}\right) \quad = \quad g$$

That is, if the autocrat is weak, the goodwill accumulated by the elected politician during the electoral campaign is dangerous for the autocrat. Since the elected politician is perceived as a credible alternative to the autocrat, this popular goodwill provides a foundation for collective action. If the revolution succeeds, the elected politician receives payoff $R > \omega$. However, if the autocrat is strong, any uprising led by the elected politician fails with certainty, and the elected politician receives utility 0. The elected politician's utility thus depends on the both the election and a post-election revolution:

$$u_j\left(\cdot\right) = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if not elected} \\ 0 & \text{if elected and leads a failed revolution} \\ \omega - \left(1 - \zeta\right) y & \text{if elected and does not attempt a revolution} \\ R & \text{if elected and leads a successful revolution} \end{cases}$$

If the autocrat is vulnerable to a popular uprising led by his elite, popular goodwill accumulated by the elected politician is dangerous. It increases the elected politician's capacity to engineer collective action against the autocrat. But if the autocrat is strong relative to his elite, the elected politician's goodwill can prove crucial. For in generating popular support for the autocrat's regime – and then ensuring that his constituents know of his personal loyalty to the autocrat himself – loyalist candidate L's electoral campaign creates a sense among his constituents that the true level of support for the regime is significant. Citizens see their compatriots attend the loyalist candidate's campaign

rallies, accept local government jobs, and chant pro-regime slogans. Consequently, citizens tend to behave "as if" they support the regime because they fear anti-regime activity will be denunciated by their counterparts. This, in turn, reduces the possibility of a popular uprising against the autocrat. If the autocrat is strong relative to his elite, the probability that a popular uprising coalesces and removes the autocrat nonetheless is

$$\Pr(S_S = 1) \quad = \quad 1 - \lambda g$$

where $\lambda \in [0, 1]$ measures the effectiveness of goodwill generated by the electoral campaign in creating at least a veneer of support for the regime.

The autocrat's utility depends on both the election and the outcome of the post-election revolution:

$$u_j(\cdot) = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if opposition candidate } m \text{ wins the election} \\ 0 & \text{if the autocrat is removed in a revolution} \\ R - \zeta_j y_j & \text{if candidate } j \text{ wins the election and a revolution fails or does not occur} \end{cases}$$

The autocrat, in short, wants both to avoid a revolution and ensure that his loyalist candidate wins the election. For if a legitimate opposition candidate wins, the autocrat loses his thin veneer of authority and governing will prove almost impossible.

The autocrat's expectations of his post-election strength ϱ condition his interest in electoral competition. In turn, the autocrat determines the intensity of the electoral campaign – and hence the quantity of goodwill accumulated by the candidates – by determining the amount of fraud in loyalist candidate j's favor. For as equation (8.1) suggests, loyalist candidate j has a weaker incentive to buy votes – and hence generates less goodwill for himself and the regime – when electoral fraud guarantees his electoral victory in advance.

8.2.2 Environment: Multiple Loyalist Candidates

Alternatively, the autocrat may modify the terms of the election by forcing two loyalist candidates j_1 and j_2 to compete against each other for the single legislative seat. This electoral strategy features both advantages and drawbacks. Most obviously, since both candidates are loyalists, the autocrat avoids the embarrassment of an opposition victory; a loyalist candidate wins with certainty. Based on Sassou Nguesso's experience in Congo, however, I assume the autocrat is unable to engage in electoral fraud. For fraud requires the acquiescence of the local bureaucracy, which enjoys personal connections with both loyalist candidates. Moreover, loyalist candidates are often able to force the autocrat to refrain from picking winners and losers as a condition for entry. The lack of electoral fraud renders these campaigns particularly intense. Competition, I show below, bids up the post-electoral transfers required for victory. And as $\zeta_j \to 1$, this electoral competition becomes more financially costly to the autocrat.

The timing of the game is visualized in Figure 8.2.

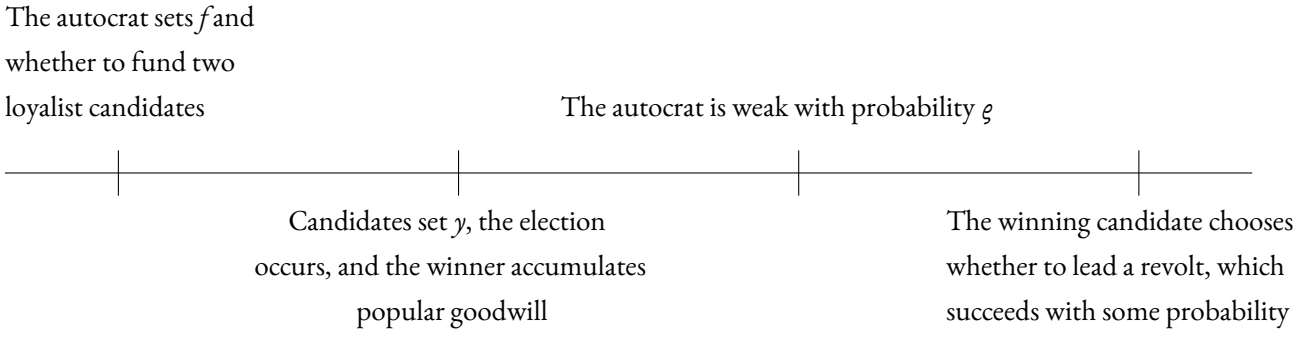

Figure 8.2: Timing of the loyalist competition game.

8.2.3 Results

Lemmas 5 and 6 characterize electoral dynamics with multiple loyalists candidate and a single loyalist candidate, respectively.

Lemma 5 (Multiple Loyalist Candidates). *Both candidates set*

$$y^{**} = \frac{\omega}{1-\gamma-\varrho_j \varkappa R} - \frac{1}{2\varphi}$$

and accumulate goodwill

$$g^{**} = \varkappa\left(\frac{\omega}{1-\zeta-\varrho_j \varkappa R} - \frac{1}{2\varphi}\right)$$

The autocrat's utility is given by

$$u_D(\cdot) = \left[R-\zeta y^{**}\right]\left[\varrho\left(1-g^{**}\right)+(1-\varrho)\lambda g^{**}\right]$$

Loyalist candidates set post-election transfers according to several factors. First, the candidates compete for the resources ω to which they have access as a legislator. As these increase, so too does their transfer y^{**}. Though affiliated with the autocrat's party, the candidates are also cognizant that their personal patronage networks – the reservoir of goodwill they accrue from the electoral campaign – may enable them to one day challenge the autocrat's hold on power. As they expect the autocrat to grow weaker – or as $\varrho_j \to 1$ – loyalist candidates set y^{**} higher, as they do when the returns from executive power R get large.

Lemma 6 (A Single Loyalist Candidate). *For simplicity, let* $\zeta_j = \zeta_m = \zeta$ *and* $\varkappa_j = \varkappa_m = \varkappa$. *Loyalist*

candidate j sets

$$y_j^* = \frac{\omega}{1-\zeta-\varrho\varkappa R} - \frac{f^*}{3} - \frac{1}{2\varphi}$$

Opposition candidate m sets

$$y_O^* = \frac{\omega}{1-\zeta-\varrho\varkappa R} + \frac{f^*}{3} - \frac{1}{2\varphi}$$

Loyalist candidate j wins with certainty and accumulates popular goodwill

$$g_L^* = \varkappa\left(\frac{\omega}{1-\zeta-\varrho\varkappa R} - \frac{f}{3} - \frac{1}{2\varphi}\right)$$

The autocrat sets electoral fraud

$$f^* = \begin{cases} 3\left[\frac{}{1- \quad - \quad _j \quad R} + \frac{1}{2}\left(\frac{\quad _D}{(1- \quad _D)- \quad _D} - \frac{R}{} - \frac{}{1}\right)\right] & \text{if } \varrho_D \geq \frac{}{+ \quad -\frac{1}{A}} \\ \frac{3}{2} & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

where $A = 2\left(\frac{}{1- \quad - \quad _j \quad R} - \frac{}{1}\right) - \frac{R}{}$. *The autocrat's utility is given by*

$$u_D(\cdot) = \left[R - \zeta_j y_j^*\right]\left[\varrho_D(1-g^*) + (1-\varrho_D)\lambda g^*\right]$$

Lemma 6 underscores why electoral competition with a single loyalist candidate is so different than with multiple loyalist candidates. A single loyalist candidate still sets y_j^* to ensure electoral victory and to create patronage networks that might enable him to challenge the autocrat later. But because the autocrat employs guarantees his victory with electoral fraud, candidate *j* rationally sets post-election transfers y_j^* lower than in Lemma 5. Consequently, the winner under a single loyalist

candidate election accrues less goodwill than with two loyalist candidates:

$$\begin{aligned} g^{**} - g^{*} &= \frac{\varkappa f^{*}}{3} \\ &\geq \frac{\varkappa}{2\varphi} \end{aligned}$$

where the final inequality follows from the minimum level of electoral fraud in an election with a single loyalist candidate $\frac{3}{2}$. Hence as the autocrat becomes less certain about popular preferences – that is, as φ declines – he increases the amount of electoral fraud to ensure the loyalist candidate wins. In turn, the loyalist candidate reduces his post-election transfer to citizens, and hence accumulates much less popular goodwill than the case with multiple loyalists compete against each other.

Proposition 6 (Loyalist Competition). *The autocrat forces multiple loyalist candidates to compete against each other when*

$$\varrho_D \leq \frac{\lambda}{1 + \frac{R \quad (g^{**} - g^{*}) - \quad \left[y_j^{*}(1 - \quad g^{*}) - y_j^{**}(1 - \quad g^{**}) \right]}{R(g^{**} - g^{*}) - \quad \left(y_j^{**} g^{**} - y_j^{*} g^{*} \right)}} \tag{8.2}$$

When crafting their strategies for parliamentary elections, autocrats employ a cut point strategy. When an autocrat is confident of his strength relative to the elite – as $\varrho_D \to 0$ – he prefers elections with multiple loyalist candidates. To understand the cut point defined in equation (8.2), consider first the case where the autocrats contributes essentially nothing to his loyalists' campaigns:

$$\varrho_D \leq \frac{\lambda}{1 + \lambda} \in \left(0, \frac{1}{2}\right]$$

As $\zeta \to 0$, the autocrat's preference for multiple loyalist elections is determined solely by λ, or the extent to which the electoral campaign generates popular goodwill for the autocrat's regime. Since this goodwill reduces the probability of popular unrest even when the autocrat is strong, it strength-

ens the autocrat's interest in multiple loyalist elections. Indeed, as $\lambda \to 1$, the autocrat is willing to accept a greater risk of popular uprising – a larger ϱ_D – to generate more goodwill as insurance. As ζ gets large, loyalist electoral competition is more costly for the autocrat, since the lack of fraud intensifies competition and drives up post-electoral transfers. For the λ parameters that render loyalist electoral competition attractive to the autocrat, the ϱ_D values for which the autocrat prefers loyalist electoral competition get small as $\zeta \gg \varkappa$. Put otherwise, when the autocrat's contribution to loyalist electoral campaigns overwhelms the goodwill they produce, the autocrat is less likely to force loyalist competition.

Proposition 6 is visualized in Figure 8.3. The x-axis measures λ; ζ appears on the y-axis; ϱ_D appears on the z-axis; and the cut point ϱ_D^* defined in (8.2) is given by the surface plane. For all ϱ_D values that lie under the plane, the autocrat always forces multiple loyalists to compete against each other in local elections. The ϱ_D^* cut point is clearly highest as $\lambda \to 1$ and $\zeta \to 0$: as goodwill generated by the electoral campaign creates a veneer of support for the regime and as the autocrat's campaign contributions decline. As long as the autocrat believes that his approval will be more useful to elite career aspirations than fomenting popular unrest with at least 0.5 probability, he organizes elections in which loyalist candidates compete to mobilize the population on his behalf.

The parameters $\varkappa$, λ, and ζ provide a foundation for understanding geographic variation in loyalist electoral competition. In the autocrat's electoral strongholds, popular support for the regime is relatively high. Consequently, the marginal goodwill generated by loyalist electoral competition is likely small. This implies that $\lambda \to 0$ in the autocrat's strongholds. Therefore, as long as loyalist competition generates popular support – or $\varkappa > 0$ – Proposition 6 predicts that loyalist competition will be most common in historically hostile regions.

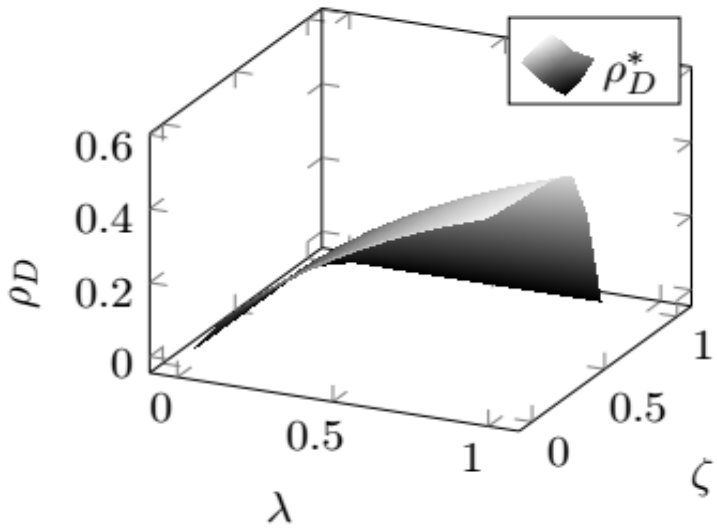

Figure 8.3: Proposition 6 visualized. The surface appearing in (x, y, z) space represents the cut point ϱ_D^* defined in (8.2). For all ϱ_D values that lie under this surface, the autocrat always forces multiple loyalists to compete against each other in local elections.

8.3 Beliefs, Regional Hostility, and Loyalist Competition

Proposition 6 calls our attention to the role of beliefs, both the autocrat's and his loyalists'. His position stronger than ever, Proposition 6 suggests that Sassou Nguesso required loyalist electoral competition in 2007 to generate goodwill for the regime, particularly important with the 2009 presidential elections approaching. The strategy was somewhat successful, as Section 8.1 suggests. Congolese citizens who loathed Sassou Nguesso were nonetheless persuaded that his lieutenants had their regions' best interests at heart. The less industrious among them donated medicine to local hospitals and furniture to local schools. The most industrious used their personal resources to create jobs for their new constituents. With Sassou Nguesso's position so dominant, his lieutenants credited Sassou

Nguesso for all manner of successes during their campaigns.

Proposition 6 compels us also to look forward: to the legislative elections of 2012, when Sassou Nguesso's position was considerably weaker. Section 8.3.1 narrates these new challenges, as well as Sassou Nguesso's response for the 2012 elections. Far fewer, indeed, were the number of loyalist candidates that were permitted to participate. Sections 8.3.2 and 8.3.3 probe the determinants of loyalist competition more systematically, using a dataset of the 404 legislative elections since Sassou Nguesso's return to power.

8.3.1 The Legislative Elections of 2012

Although he continued his liberal foreign travel schedule, by mid 2011 Brazzaville was unusually tense. After witnessing the Arab Spring of 2011 climax with his friend – and occasional weapons supplier[36] – Muammar Ghadaffi's death, Sassou Nguesso "[feared] more an uncontrollable popular uprising than the threat of his political opponents."[37] He had good reason to be concerned. With his second presidential term set to expire in 2016, Sassou Nguesso was confronted with the prospect of his own succession, which he would negotiate without the support of his former French allies. In early 2012, candidate Eva Joly captured the mood of the French political class during her presidential campaign:

> We all know of Sassou Nguesso, President of Congo-Brazzaville, who has on his hands the blood of hundred of thousands of people. On his territory he presided over the worst abuses, rapes, and mass assassinations. ...Sassou Nguesso, he also of the *biens mal acquis* scandal, who controls countless bank accounts and, without a doubt, 20% of Congo's GDP, all while presiding over one of the most tragic countries on Earth.[38]

[36] Interview with Guy Mafimba, 31 March 2012.
[37] *La Lettre du Continent*, 26 May 2011.
[38] *La Semaine Africaine*, 17 February 2012.

The best response the regime could muster:

> President Denis Sassou Nguesso, who bears, with honor and dignity, the charge of his people, is not the criminal [Eva Joly] believes. Denis Sassou Nguesso has never killed anyone in Congo and certainly not in Norway, [Joly's country of origin].[39]

Given the severity of his crimes and the ascent of the International Criminal Court, Sassou Nguesso's central preoccupation was diplomatic immunity. He had either to retain power himself or anoint a trusted successor, which limited the pool of candidates to his sons and nephews.

None of his sons and nephews was easily acceptable to the regime's power centers, however.[40] Hence in mid-2011 Sassou Nguesso charged his partisans with "sowing the seeds" for an eventual constitutional revision, the terms of which were implicit at the outset:

> If [executive and legislative] functions are separated, [term limits] become unjustified, even undermining to the free choice of presidential candidates by the sovereign population. "Love your neighbor as yourself."[41]

Elected to the National Assembly in 2007, Jean Claude Ibovi was among Sassou Nguesso's most loyal allies. His satellite party, the *Mouvement pour la démocratie et le progrès* began its life as the *Convention nationale pour la défense et la promotion des idées de Denis Sassou Nguesso*, the National Convention for the Defense and Promotion of the Ideas of Denis Sassou Nguesso. In October 2011 Ibovi gave the clearest signal yet that the regime would accept a "semi-presidential" system in exchange for abolishing both term and age limits:

> The constitution that we adopted [in 2002] is no longer in harmony with our current political context. Following the 1997 war, we needed a president who was a uniter –

[39] *La Semaine Africaine*, 17 February 2012.

[40] Studying hereditary succession in autocracies, Brownlee [38] finds that chosen successors must be focal points: broadly acceptable to a regime's multiple power centers.

[41] *La Semaine Africaine*, 23 August 2011.

> the critical pillar of all our political institutions – and who could restore the authority of the state and foster national reconciliation. This constitution was appropriate for its time. Now we must move towards real separation of powers between the executive and the legislature, so that ministers are responsible before parliament and not before the President of the Republic.[42]

As Sassou Nguesso prepared for a constitutional revision that would enable him to retain power with a veneer of legitimacy – however thin – Brazzaville's underground opposition networks flirted more openly with their responses. Former rebel leaders from Bouenza searched for arms throughout the sub-region. The most intrepid and politically engaged members of the diaspora sold their homes in Paris and returned to Brazzaville, where they sought to mobilize popular unrest. Former assistants to Denis Gokana courted the diplomatic community by revealing the mechanics of oil theft. The few independently wealthy Congolese citizens redoubled their charitable activities to create popular constituencies for eventual presidential campaigns.

With Brazzaville inching towards crisis, the PCT staged its sixth party congress in late July 2011, a four day affair during which Sassou Nguesso remade the party's hierarchy. In the presence of delegations from North Korea, China, and Cuba, the congress refashioned its *bureau politique* – its inner circle – in Sassou Nguesso's image. Gone were the *caciques*, the party elders who managed to retained independent patronage networks. In their stead were Sassou Nguesso's relatives: son and potential successor Denis Christel, daughter Claudia, nephew Jean Jacques Bouya, father to his mistress Firmin Ayessa, and honorary nephew François Ibovi. There were also a number of his most trusted government ministers: Henri Djombo, Pierre Moussa, Rololphe Adada, Isidore Mvouba, Henri Ossèbi, Gilbert Ndongo, Charles Zacharie Bowao. For all the pre-congress jockeying by long-serving regime lieutenants, Pierre Ngolo, a relative neophyte from Gamboma with no real popular

[42] *La Semaine Africaine*, 28 October 2011.

constituency, was named the PCT's new secretary general "against all expectations."[43] The only member of the *secretariat permanent* to retain his position was Michel Ngakala, a Sassou Nguesso nephew and Cobra commander during the war.

The most important change that issued from the congress was quietly announced in February at Sassou Nguesso's Mpila residence.[44] Sassou Nguesso's political allies would be required to dissolve their satellite parties, join the PCT, and submit to its candidate selection process. In short, there would be far less loyalist competition in 2012 than in 2007. For the character of the 2012 National Assembly would be critical. If the constitution was to be changed, the National Assembly would have to be complicit. In preparation, Sassou Nguesso needed elected deputies to be loyal to him, not their constituents. He needed the population's elected leaders to be unwilling to side with them in case of popular unrest.

Most of Sassou Nguesso's political allies heeded his instructions. They were rewarded with membership in the PCT *bureau politique* or *comité central*.[45] Yet several resisted, and their ensuing battle with Secretary General Pierre Ngolo consumed Brazzaville for the next year. The resisters were united not by philosophical differences with the PCT. Indeed, offered one: "We are the PCT's most reliable partners."[46] Rather, the resisters shared a common profile: young, ambitious politicians from Congo's northern regions, whose access to the public treasury nurtured their ambitions to succeed Sassou Nguesso in 2016. The resisters, in short, were Sassou Nguesso's nephews and onetime mentees, who were no longer candidates for succession. Out of Sassou Nguesso's favor, their only plausible claim to succession was the popular favor they acquired – and that their parliamentary candidates acquired for them – during campaign season. By dissolving their political parties, Sassou Nguesso understood, they would sacrifice this.

[43] Interview with Ndengui, 8 June 2013; *La Semaine Africaine*, 13 January 2012.

[44] *La Semaine Africaine*, 27 February 2011. See also *La Lettre du Continent*, 24 February 2011.

[45] *La Semaine Africaine*, 26 July 2011.

[46] The national leadership of Club 2002 Pur met on 2 December 2011 in Brazzaville. Asked whether the party would join the PCT, Just Désiré Mondélé said only this. See *La Semaine Africaine*, 9 December 2011.

None of the resisters protested as vigorously as André Okombi Salissa, who could scarcely conceal his presidential ambitions. His protestations during the PCT congress were an uncomfortable mix of reassurance and threat:

> I will never fight you. I will always remain faithful. But if you are no longer president, I will be.[47]

As a successor, Okombi Salissa was also entirely unacceptable to Sassou Nguesso. As one astute Brazzaville political observer put it:

> He represents a different part of Congo. ...If Okombi Salissa became president, Sassou Nguesso couldn't be sure he wouldn't prosecute him, or target his children.[48]

Sassou Nguesso "realized he had created a monster."[49] Forcing Okombi Salissa to relinquish his political party to the PCT – its hierarchy newly dominated by Sassou Nguesso – was the most effective way to undermine his personal constituency and his political ambitions. Loyalist electoral competition, in short, had to be limited.

For all the public infighting, however, by June 2012 – some six weeks before voting – it was clear that not all loyalists were bound by Sassou Nguesso's new dictate. Loyalist competition in southern regions raged just as fiercely as in years past, and many loyalist parties were as active as ever: Claudine Munari's MUST, Roland Bouiti Viaudo's MAR, Benjamin Bounkoulou's UR, and Claude Alphonse Nsilou's RC, most notably. In most southern districts, political campaigns remained unchanged. Loyalist candidates waged elaborate gift-giving contests, with local populations receiving ambulances, school supplies, and neighborhood televisions. The map in Figure 8.4 visualizes the proportion of electoral districts in which multiple loyalist candidates competed against each other.

[47] Interview with Ngungui, 8 June 2013.
[48] Interview with Ngungui, 8 June 2013.
[49] Interview with Ngungui, 8 June 2013.

Whereas in 2007 – as Figure 8.1 made clear – seven of Congo's 10 regions witnessed loyalist competition in more than half of their electoral districts. In 2012 only Kouilou did, as well as the southern quarters of Brazzaville.

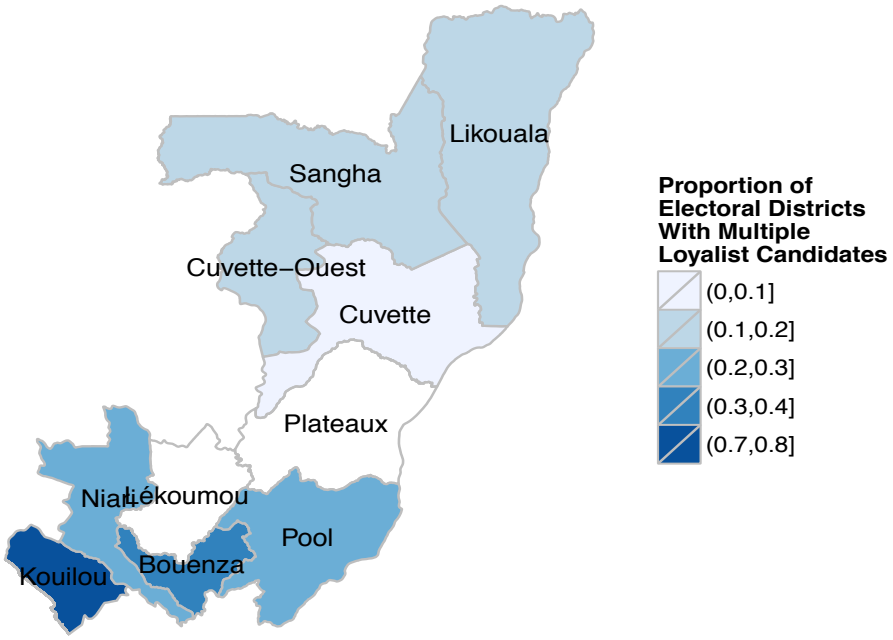

Figure 8.4: The proportion of electoral districts, by region, in which multiple loyalist candidates competed against each other in 2012.

The lack of loyalist competition in northern districts had far-reaching implications. Of the 44 electoral districts in Plateaux, Cuvette, Cuvette-Ouest, Sangha, and Likouala, PCT candidates claimed 41; loyalist parties that had resisted dissolution were simply marginalized. The PCT can-

didates themselves were also distinctive. Since the composition of the new National Assembly was crucial for a constitutional revision, for the first time Sassou Nguesso fielded his family and closest lieutenants: son Denis Christel, daughter Claudia, nephews Jean Jacques Bouya and Serge Bouya, and oil advisor Denis Gokana. Although their campaigns were lavish – Bouya traveled his electoral district in a helicopter, the only candidate in the country to do so – it was clear that they would not accept defeat. Denis Christel faced essentially no opposition in Oyo, ultimately winning with 99.88% of the vote. Daughter Claudia issued this thinly veiled threat during one campaign event in Brazzaville:

> We will accept victory only in the first round of voting. We refuse to compete in a second round. If there was a second round, I would conclude that you don't love me, that you betrayed me.[50]

In districts without loyalist competition, as the model in Section 8.2 suggests, candidates' appeals were far less benevolent.

Of course, loyalist candidates were still expected use their electoral campaigns to mobilize support for Sassou Nguesso. In early May, Bruno Itoua scheduled a trip to his Ollombo constituency to coincide with Sassou Nguesso's time in Oyo. With the two villages but eight miles apart, Itoua bussed his constituents to the airport upon Sassou Nguesso's arrival, giving it a triumphant feel:

> Deputy Bruno Jean Richard Itoua mobilized his constituents to reserve a deeply warm and enthusiastic welcome to the presidential couple at the Ollombo international airport. ...The population, once again, their willingness to mobilize at the deputy's call to support the president. For the deputy, it was an occasion to prove his attachment – and that of his constituents – to the head of state, Denis Sassou Nguesso.[51]

[50] *La Semaine Africaine*, 3 July 2012.
[51] *La Semaine Africaine*, 18 May 2012.

In the absence of primaries, PCT candidates even sought their party's nomination by advertising their ability to mobilize support for Sassou Nguesso. In one confidential campaign memo, Pierre Mpassi, a PCT incumbent in Mayeye, Lékoumou, sought funding for an ambulance by marketing himself as an investment. The only PCT deputy in Lékoumou, he had mobilized more than 90% of Mayeye's voters on Sassou Nguesso's behalf in the 2009 elections.

When voting was finished, Sassou Nguesso's loyalists controlled 119 of the Assembly's 137 seats. the National Assembly included a son,[52] daughter,[53] uncle,[54] son-in-law,[55] four nephews,[56] five of his closest advisors,[57] his handpicked PCT secretary general,[58] and 25 current or onetime government ministers. Of the National Assembly's 137 deputies, fully 35 owed Sassou Nguesso *everything*. Just prior to voting, the regime dispatched Germain Céphas Ewangui to celebrate the "transparency" of the process:

> Our feelings are really the best they could possibly be, and civil society could not have done any better. We can even say, all while congratulating the Congolese political case, majority and opposition, that the country has just made a giant step in its march, not to constructing democracy, but to consolidating it.[59]

Few agreed.

8.3.2 Beliefs and Loyalist Competition

Sassou Nguesso's position in 2002 more closely resembled 2012 than 2007. As Chapter 1 detailed, the legislative elections of 2002 immediately followed the presidential elections, a period fraught

[52] Denis Christel.
[53] Claudia Lemboumba.
[54] Aimé Emmanuel Yoka.
[55] Hugues Ngouélondélé.
[56] Jean Claude Ibovi, Jean Jacques Bouya, Serge Bouya, and Jean de Dieu Kourissa.
[57] Laurent Tengo, Simon Mfoutou, Gabriel Longobe, Denis Gokana, and Bruno Itoua.
[58] Pierre Ngolo.
[59] *La Semaine Africaine*, 23 December 2011.

with tension. Sassou Nguesso had yet to firmly establish his geographic in-group, parallel government apparatus, or freemasonry lodge. His foreign travel schedule was sparse, foreign creditors were clambering for repayment, and the nascent SNPC was just operational. The model in Section 8.2 suggests that loyalist competition should have been far less extensive as well.

To probe the effect of Sassou Nguesso's domestic position on loyalist competition more systematically, I employ a dataset of Congo's legislative elections. For each legislative election in 2002, 2007, and 2012 – some 404 district elections in total – the dataset records candidates in the first and second rounds,[60] their party affiliations and family linkages with Sassou Nguesso, electoral outcomes, vote shares, and a variety of other district and regional level measures. To capture Sassou Nguesso's baseline level of support within districts, I record whether he received a plurality of votes cast within the region in the 1992 presidential election, as well as how many ministers and generals hail from the region at the time of the election.

I employ two statistical models. First, I estimate the probability that district r was subject to loyalist competition in year t with a logit model, controlling for a variety of district and region level factors: its loyalty during the civil war, population and population density, Sassou Nguesso's popularity in 1992 and at the time of the election, and whether a Sassou Nguesso family member competed. I also include a full set of district fixed effects, which accommodate any observed characteristics: particularly strong cultures of political competition or relatively more Sassou Nguesso supporters. In the absence of polling data, these measures collectively capture district level support for the regime, whether a result of economic investment or patronage. This is crucial if greater loyalist competition may simply reflect more Sassou Nguesso support in the district.

By restricting attention to variation within the same electoral districts over time, this fixed effects model considers only districts that have remained unchanged since Sassou Nguesso returned

[60] Congo's legislative elections occur in two rounds. If no candidate wins greater than 50% of votes cast during the first round, the top two vote getters compete in a second round run-off.

to power in 1997. Since Sassou Nguesso has systematically shifted legislative seats from south to north since 2002 – again, as reflection of his core constituency – the fixed effects model considers only those districts that remained unchanged for at least two electoral cycles. Hence I also employ a matching estimator that creates "treatment" and "control" electoral districts that are similar in all respects save treatment status. In particular, I define district elections that occurred in year 2007 as the treatment group, while district elections in 2002 or 2012 are included in the control group. I then use a matching algorithm to restrict attention to district elections in the treatment and control units that are essentially identical. In this matched dataset, elections in the treatment and control groups occurred in districts of roughly equal size and population density. Treatment and control district elections are apportioned equally between northern and southern Congo, were equally supportive of Sassou Nguesso and the PCT in the early 1990s, and are equally represented among the ministerial and general corps when they were held. Treatment and control district elections were also equally likely to feature a member of Sassou Nguesso's family or concubine network. The full list of matching covariates appears in Table 8.1. With this matched dataset, I then estimate the probability that a district election featured loyalist competition as a function of whether it occurred in the 2007 electoral cycle.

The results appear in Table 8.2, and are consistent across models. They suggest that elections in district *r* in 2007 – when Sassou Nguesso enjoyed a uniquely strong domestic position – were some 40% more likely to feature multiple loyalists than elections in the same district in 2002 or 2012. Changes in regional representation in the minister and general corps – proxies for Sassou Nguesso's support in the region in which district *r* is located – have virtually no effect on loyalist electoral competition. The qualitative evidence from Section 8.1 and the statistical evidence above point to the same conclusion. Sassou Nguesso's political strategy during the 2007 legislative elections was fundamentally different than in either 2002 or 2012. In 2002 Sassou Nguesso was just beginning to consolidate personal authority, and by 2012 the uncertainties of succession gave the most ambitious elites

Table 8.1: Balance Improvement for Matched Data

	Means Treated All Data	Means Control All Data	Means Treated Matched Data	Means Control Matched Data
Family/Concubine	0.0667	0.0725	0.0667	0.0667
PCT Victory in 1993	0.1333	0.1304	0.1333	0.1333
PCT Proportion of Regional Seats in 1993	0.1139	0.1504	0.1139	0.1153
DSN Round 1 Plurality in 1992	0.2667	0.3768	0.2667	0.2667
Generals from Region k in Year t	3.5556	5.5652	3.5556	3.5556
Ministers from Region k in Year t	3.2444	4.0000	3.2444	2.8667
Southern District	0.6667	0.5652	0.6667	0.6667
Year 2002	0.0000	0.2174	0.0000	0.4889
Year 2007	1.0000	0.0000	1.0000	0.0000
Year 2012	0.0000	0.7826	0.0000	0.5111
Pointe-Noire	0.1556	0.1014	0.1556	0.1556
Regional Population Density	2536.2473	1656.4793	2536.2473	2535.9104
District Population	48025.3778	39532.8261	48025.3778	49885.9778

an incentive to cultivate popular bases of support. Uniquely powerful in 2007, Sassou Nguesso employed the legislative elections to mobilize popular support on his behalf.

8.3.3 Geography, Hostility, and Loyalist Competition

Although the results in Table 8.2 are consistent with the theory in Section 8.2, Congo has experienced only three waves of legislative elections since Sassou Nguesso's return to power. Therefore, it is possible that the 2007 political environment generated more intense loyalist competition for reasons unrelated to the theory. To substantiate this chapter's central theoretical claims, I also evaluate the model's second key observable implication: Sassou Nguesso should be more likely to require loyalist electoral competition in historically hostile electoral districts.

The 1997 civil war remains the central fault line in contemporary Congolese politics. It divided the country neatly into north and south, and Sassou Nguesso's successive governments – all dominated by northerners – have allocated public investment accordingly. In the context of the model,

Table 8.2: The prevalence of loyalist competition in the 2007 legislative elections

	Loyalist Competition Logit	Loyalist Competition Logit	Loyalist Competition Matching
2007 Cycle	1.928**	3.056**	1.624**
	(0.353)	(0.7436)	(0.481)
Southern District	2.188*	-6.56e+14	
	(0.981)	(1.02e+15)	
Regional Plurality 1992	1.512	-6.56e+14	
	(1.022)	(1.02e+15)	
Generals	-0.051	0.642	
	(0.058)	(0.527)	
Ministers	-0.021	-0.558	
	(0.089)	(0.477)	
Family/Concubine	-0.930	45.07	
	(0.960)	(1.85e+5)	
Population	0.000	-0.000	
	(0.000)	(0.014)	
Regional Population Density	0.000	-0.000	
	(0.000)	(0.000)	
Year Fixed Effects	No	Yes	Yes
N	195	195	82

Significance levels: †† : 20% † : 10% * : 5% ** : 1%

Sassou Nguesso should be much more likely to require loyalist electoral competition – regardless of the year in which the elections occurred – in districts that opposed him during the 1997 war. To identify the effect of these historical hostilities on Sassou Nguesso's strategies in subsequent electoral strategies, I create a dichotomous indicator that assumes value 1 if electoral district *r* is located in a region that fought against Sassou Nguesso in the 1997 civil war. This includes all five of Congo's southern regions – Kouilou, Pool, Niari, Bouenza, and Lékoumou – and all electoral districts in the Bacongo and Makélékélé neighborhoods of Brazzaville. Of the 404 district elections in the dataset, some 219 were hostile to Sassou Nguesso.

Since hostile and non-hostile electoral districts may be systematically different in ways that also influence Sassou Nguesso's choice of political strategy, I employ a matching algorithm to ensure that electoral districts that rebelled against Sassou Nguesso are virtually identical to those that did not. The choice of matching covariates, however, is complicated by the possibility of post-treatment bias. If we match on post-1997 covariates – and these covariates, in turn, are caused by the sides chosen by electoral districts in the 1997 war – we risk understating the magnitude of the treatment effect. If, however, we fail to match on post-1997 covariates – and these covariates capture systematic differences in northern and southern electoral districts that are not consequences of the 1997 war – then we risk attributing too much relevance to the 1997 war.

Therefore, I create two matched datasets. In the first, I match only on pre-1997 covariates. Parliamentary elections in this dataset occurred in districts that are of roughly equal size and population density, were equally supportive of Sassou Nguesso and the PCT prior to the 1997 war, occurred in a roughly equal proportion of urban and rural areas, and are drawn equally from the thee waves of parliamentary elections. In the second, I match on potentially relevant post-1997 covariates as well. Elections in this dataset occurred in districts that are also equally represented in the general and ministerial corps at the time of voting, and were equally likely to include a member of Sassou Nguesso's family or concubine network. The full list of matching covariates for this second dataset, as well

Table 8.3: Balance Improvement for Matched Data

	Means Treated All Data	Means Control All Data	Means Treated Matched Data	Means Control Matched Data
PCT Victory in 1993	0.0000	0.3333	0.0000	0.0000
PCT Proportion of Regional Seats in 1993	0.0091	0.3306	0.0091	0.0151
Year 2002	0.0870	0.2000	0.0870	0.1014
Year 2007	0.4348	0.3333	0.4348	0.4348
Year 2012	0.4783	0.4667	0.4783	0.4638
Pointe-Noire	0.2029	0.0000	0.2029	0.0000
Regional Population Density	3307.5168	4.6564	3307.5168	8.4983
District Population	52186.1884	28623.5556	52186.1884	33018.8551
Family/Concubine	0.0290	0.1333	0.0290	0.0145
Generals from Region *k* in Year *t*	2.3478	8.4889	2.3478	1.6812
Ministers from Region *k* in Year *t*	2.8116	5.0667	2.8116	2.2609

as balance statistics, appears in Table 8.3. With these matched datasets, I employ a logit model that estimates the probability that an election in district *r* in year *t* featured multiple loyalist candidates.

The results appear in Table 8.4 and are again consistent across models. Elections in historically hostile southern districts – notwithstanding the year in which the elections occurred – were between 25% and 45% more likely to feature multiple loyalist candidates. As one loyalist candidate confirmed:

> This is [the regime's] way of courting the southern population. They put candidates from [three or four loyalist parties] in the same district. ...Sassou Nguesso wants the best candidate to win: the candidate who can mobilize the population behind the *majorité présidentielle*. ...The regime is able to broadcast its message. ...If they sent Pierre Ngolo, [the Secretary General of the PCT] to a southern electoral district, even with sacks of money, he would be chased away. But if the regime uses its [loyalist intermediaries from the area], the population will come. It gives the regime's message more credibility.

Table 8.4: The prevalence of loyalist competition in southern districts

	Loyalist Competition Logit	Loyalist Competition Logit
Southern District	1.110*	2.270**
	(0.567)	(0.808)
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
N	95	82
Significance levels:	†† : 20% † : 10%	* : 5% ** : 1%

> In the north of the country, there are no stakes. The popular is already won over. For them, they employ extremely divisive rhetoric: "You must not vote for UPADS. We must not let them take power."[61]

8.4 Conclusion

To generate at least the appearance of popular goodwill, this chapter finds, Sassou Nguesso forces – and often finances – electoral competition between loyalists. Since their platforms are identical and the elections are fair, their campaigns are essentially contests in gift-giving. In giving so much, they accrue genuine goodwill. As long as Sassou Nguesso's surrogates believe his favor is vital to their political careers, the model in Section 8.2 suggests, the surrogates refract popular acclaim to him and create at least a veneer of support for the regime. But when Sassou Nguesso is vulnerable, his surrogates may use their goodwill to lead a popular uprising. Sassou Nguesso knows this, and he designs electoral rules accordingly. In 2007, when he thoroughly dominated his elite, Sassou Nguesso expanded loyalist competition sharply. After the March 4, 2012, explosions and with a constitutional revision looming, he curtailed it. He did so, however, more sharply in the north than in the south, where decades of hostility rendered goodwill more important and Sassou Nguesso more tolerant of

[61] Interview with Marcel Moukoko, 8 July 2013.

risk.

If the popular demobilization afforded by opposition alliances is no substitute for goodwill, goodwill is no substitute for the credible threat of violence. As Brazzaville grew more tense throughout 2012, this became ever more clear. And with the regime so reliant on foreign aid and investment – if no longer debt relief – opposition leaders increasingly questioned whether the threat of violence was genuinely credible. Chapter 9 considers Sassou Nguesso's response.

9

Organizing Modern Repression, 2012-2016

"Try to put in greatest security those things that we think are most valuable to us."

"How, father, would one be especially able to get an advantage over his enemies?"

"By Zeus, son," he said, "this is no ordinary or simple task you are asking about. But be assured that the one who is going to do this must be a plotter, a dissembler, wily,

a cheat, a thief, rapacious, and the sort who takes advantage of his enemies in everything."

And Cyrus, laughing, said, "Heracles, father, what sort of man you say I must become!"

Being such a sort, son," he said, "you would be a man both most just and most lawful."

..."You must be on guard especially where you know you are weakest."

– Xenophon, *The Education of Cyrus*

On March 4, 2012, Brazzaville woke to a series of explosions at the Mpila munitions depot. The depot was reduced to ashes and, located less than a mile from Sassou Nguesso's private residence, so too was the president's final line of defense against his domestic enemies. The explosions destroyed large swathes of the Ouenzé and Talangaï neighborhoods, erasing 14, 000 homes from the cityscape and killing perhaps 2, 000 citizens. With the government insisting on a death toll of less than 300 – the better to keep up appearances – soldiers dumped corpses into the Congo River at night. Survivors lived in appalling conditions. At least 17, 000 refugees sought shelter in a handful of tent cities throughout Brazzaville, where poor sanitation and inadequate foodstuffs generated fatal cholera outbreaks. Although the government promised to indemnify to affected citizens, the area's affluent residents were well compensated and the impoverished mostly neglected [42].[1]

The explosions were almost certainly the opening salvo in an aborted *coup d'état*. Notwithstanding its official denials, the regime apparently felt similarly. At the very least, the regime used

[1]Interviews with several affected residents, March and April 2012.

the explosions as a pretext to eliminate its enemies. Suspicion quickly settled on Colonel Marcel Ntsourou, second in command of the *Conseil national de securité*, the domestic surveillance apparatus. Ntsourou celebrated his 50th birthday the night before with friends and subordinates from his native Lekana, a quiet town in northern Plateaux. He welcomed them with these words:

> In the history of any collective, my dear brothers, each generation must assume its place in history, whatever the price; for otherwise the fate of the collective itself will be threatened. I will accomplish my duty to you all .... I remind you that a people survives across history only by its own will, and never by the will of others. I remind you also that everything has its limit, even fear itself must have its limits. ...Nature requires of men a constant offensive to vindicate their ideals; even confronted with the impossible and with danger, one must advance. Victory belongs to the audacious, those who refuse to retreat [122].

Ntsourou was incarcerated in late March and tortured on command of Jean Francois Ndenguet.[2] The government's investigation soon expanded to Mathias Dzon and André Okombi Salissa, whose initial refusal to disband his CADD-MJ elicited Sassou Nguesso's ire. The three were suspected of forming an ethnic "Téké axis" against Sassou Nguesso's Oyo-based regime. By mid April other opposition leaders, including Paul Marie Mpouélé, had also been incarcerated for inciting protests against the "highest authorities of the state"[43].

The government's negligence following the explosions and subsequent incarcerations generated widespread frustration in Brazzaville. Scion of one of Congo's few independently wealthy families, Joe Washington Ebina created an NGO to lobby on behalf of the victims. In so doing, he gave voice to the mass of disaffected *Brazzavillois* – of northern and southern extraction – who were prepared to mobilize for change. The country's few independent newspapers amplified their criticism. One

[2] Find citation for Herve Ambroise Malonga's allegations.

even argued that "Sassou Nguesso was at the epicenter of an enterprise almost criminal in its dealings" [43]. The government responded. The High Council for Free Expression suspended *La Voix du Peuple* for six months in May. After it published a new edition in September, the High Council added nine months to the suspension. *Le Glaive* published its first two editions in August and September, and were promptly labeled "seditious" by the High Council; *Le Glaive* was suspended for six months. These suspensions did nothing to calm things. Indeed, a year later Ebina declared on RFI, "not a single house has been reconstructed." The government marked the disaster's anniversary with a concert in Brazzaville. "This is a scandal," Ebina continued, "particularly given all the families still in need."

Fresh accounts of Sassou Nguesso's corruption emerged. In February French police searched the Neuilly-sur-Seine mansion of daughter Julienne, where they reportedly seized $10 million. French police soon targeted homes owned by nephews Edgard and Willy, daughters Claudia and Ninelle, son Denis Christel, brother Maurice, wife Antoinette, and Sassou Nguesso himself. In May Antoinette celebrated her 70th birthday in St. Tropez, a five day affair that reportedly cost nearly $1.3 million. In December the French press reported that, between 2005 and 2011, Sassou Nguesso spent nearly $70 million on various luxury goods and property, including $1.7 million on suits at a single Paris boutique [43]. Meanwhile, the government continued to "sow the seeds" for an eventual constitutional revision. Appearing on RFI in April 2014, Bienvenu Okiémy, the government's spokesperson, was remarkably direct:

> The revision of the Constitution must not be a taboo! When the sovereign people, the Congolese people, choose to revise it, all the ways and means will be put at their disposal. ...The government is listening to the Congolese people. When the Congolese people would like to amend the Constitution, I think the government must take that into account and suggest it. ...The battle for Congo's democracy will proceed in full transparency [30].

Capturing public opinion, Mathias Dzon declared that "Sassou Nguesso's departure in 2016 is non-negotiable." By the end of the year he was forbidden from traveling abroad and threatened with house arrest [43].

Sentenced to five years' hard labor in September 2013, Ntsourou was released unexpectedly just weeks later. Emboldened, he renewed his assault on the regime with a media campaign. In a series of interviews with RFI and independent newspapers in Brazzaville, Ntsourou accused Sassou Nguesso of gross corruption and, more notably, of ordering the Beach Massacre of 1999, when nearly 400 young men were killed in Brazzaville after repatriation by the United Nations. The accusation gave new life to the French judicial investigation. Ntsourou was soon visited by two prominent Sassou Nguesso emissaries – brother Maurice, a prominent businessman, and Admiral Hilaire Moko, a nephew and leading figure in the security apparatus – who advised him to refrain from further criticism [43]. Ntsourou refused, for his intrepidness had won him a sizable following among Brazzaville's poor. Indeed, he had assembled a virtual militia in the area surrounding his official residence. On the morning of 16 December his Brazzaville home was raided by the Republican Guard. Four hours later nearly 40 of Ntsourou's young bodyguards had been killed and 55 arrested, including Ntsourou himself. He remains in police custody. But other former military officers were exploring the possibilities of armed struggle as well. One southern rebel leader told me:

> Everyday I regret having laid down my weapons. Everyday I regret making peace with [Sassou Nguesso]. If I had access to weapons – if my weapons were anywhere near equal to theirs – I would go back to the bush and fight. And the entire population would support me. You must help us, Mr. Carter. [3]

Led by former Lissouba ministers, the diaspora in Paris also intensified its efforts "to mobilize opposition within the country," using terms like "relationships of force" [31]. Brazzaville activists pri-

[3]Interview with Colonel Pierre Mboungou Mboungou, 7 June 2013.

vately conceded that a return to war – or at least widescale violence – was likely as the government prepared for a constitutional referendum. Signaling its capacity for suppression and willingness to employ it, between May and July 2014 the government deported as many as 200,000 immigrants from DRC, or 0.05% of Congo's total population. Many of the victims alleged rape and torture by police [96]. Since DRC immigrants imported agricultural commodities – the road between Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire remained in disrepair, shutting Brazzaville from the southern agricultural zone – and provided cheap labor, prices spiked by as much as 500%. To limit popular frustration, the government launched a radio campaign intended to stoke xenophobia. One expatriate described the songs that played on government radio as "really hateful."[4]

Chapters 7 and 8 made clear that Sassou Nguesso does all he can to prevent popular unrest. For suppression itself is more costly for Africa's autocrats than ever before. Since the end of the Cold War, the world's poorest autocracies have grown more reliant on Western creditors for foreign aid and debt relief. And this reliance makes violence against their populations potentially more costly. Africa's autocrats risk development aid, foreign investment, and debt forgiveness [57]. Congo's opposition leaders know this. "If we could just get a few hundred people in the streets," two opposition leaders confided to me as they plotted an Arab Spring, "Sassou Nguesso could never kill them all."[5] Brazzaville's increasingly tense climate reminded everyone that the threat of violence remained central to Sassou Nguesso's rule. For all his efforts to rob citizens of opposition leaders and curry public support with local interlocutors, as a last resort Sassou Nguesso had to credibly threaten violence. His challenge, though, was to do so *even when it may not be credible*.

In fact, Sassou Nguesso began preparing for this as soon as he seized power. He did so by organizing his internal security apparatus strategically. Section 9.1 documents this. It employs a dataset of all appointments to, and promotions within, the Congolese security apparatus – Presidential Guard,

[4] Interview with Angi Ngumbu, 22 July 2014.
[5] Interview with Wilfried Kivouvou and Patrick Eric Mampouya, 26 June 2013.

Army, Navy, Air Force, Police, Territorial Surveillance, and Gendarmerie – between September 2006 and November 2009, amounting to some 15, 000 personnel shifts. In describing the internal security apparatus, Section 9.1 uncovers a paradox. The security officers who are most likely to suppress popular uprisings – those imported from historically antagonistic regions – are also the most likely to elicit them. For their disregard for the population under their charge renders them both more willing to suppress and more eager to abuse.

Section 9.2 employs a formal model to probe the dynamics of internal security appointments in autocracies. It suggests that, in hostile areas, autocrats employ a "suppression strategy." Since the probability of popular uprising is high, autocrats prefer local security officers who are more willing to suppress the local population. In friendly areas, by contrast, autocrats employ a "development strategy," in which appointees sympathetic to the local population engage in less expropriation. The model also suggests an appointee's ethnic affinity with the local population and tenure in office are correlated. When autocrats rely on local appointees more to curry popular goodwill than suppress uprisings, autocrats are also less concerned with clientelistic linkages between local officers and the population that could challenge the autocrat's own. Section 9.3 presents a range of quantitative evidence in support.

9.1 Suppression and Representation

9.1.1 Remaking Local Politics

Sassou Nguesso remade local politics upon returning to power. He did so in a way that rendered local officials almost entirely accountable to him.

He retained the country's 10 administrative regions and their constituent districts. In principle, each region is governed by a regional council, allocated among parties on the basis of proportional representation. Regional councils are the highest elected body in local government. As one council

vice-president put it, they are "almost completely powerless."[6] Regardless of population, each regional council is given an operating budget of some $4.2 million per year. This $4.2 million must fund *everything*: salaries, building maintenance, transportation costs, and whatever economic development projects the council undertakes. In practice, $1.8 million – just less than half – is earmarked for the salaries of each regional council's roughly 20 members, their staff, and all associated maintenance expenses. With just $2.4 million left, one council member acknowledged his region benefits from a single, relatively small scale intervention at a time: usually a school rehabilitation project or agricultural intervention. Even then, their policy autonomy is limited by Brazzaville. Said another council vice-president:

> We tried to provide tractors to districts to increase production, but the ministry said: "No, that's the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture." They give five tractors to Louvakou, and they can't be [relocated], so all the other districts wait.[7]

Since the country's southern regions are far more populated than their northern counterparts, this policy yields a decidedly inequitable distribution of resources, even at the local level. Figure 9.1 reports annual regional budget allocations per capita, using 2007 census figures. Since the government systematically overstated the northern population to justify shifting National Assembly seats form south to north, the figure understates per capita spending in northern regions, and hence regional spending inequality. Still, southern regions receive nearly 40% less per capita than northern regions.

Executive authority in each of the 10 regions is vested in a prefect, appointed by Sassou Nguesso himself "on proposition of the Interior Minister." Raymond Zéphyrin Mboulou, Interior Minister since 2007, described the prefect's role this way:

> The state must be seen as the agent of public power, with all its attendant ceremonial functions. The prefect is the agent of the executive branch of government in the re-

[6] Interview with Francy Ibouanga-Bouckedy, 11 July 2013
[7] Interview with Francy Ibouanga-Bouckedy, 11 July 2013

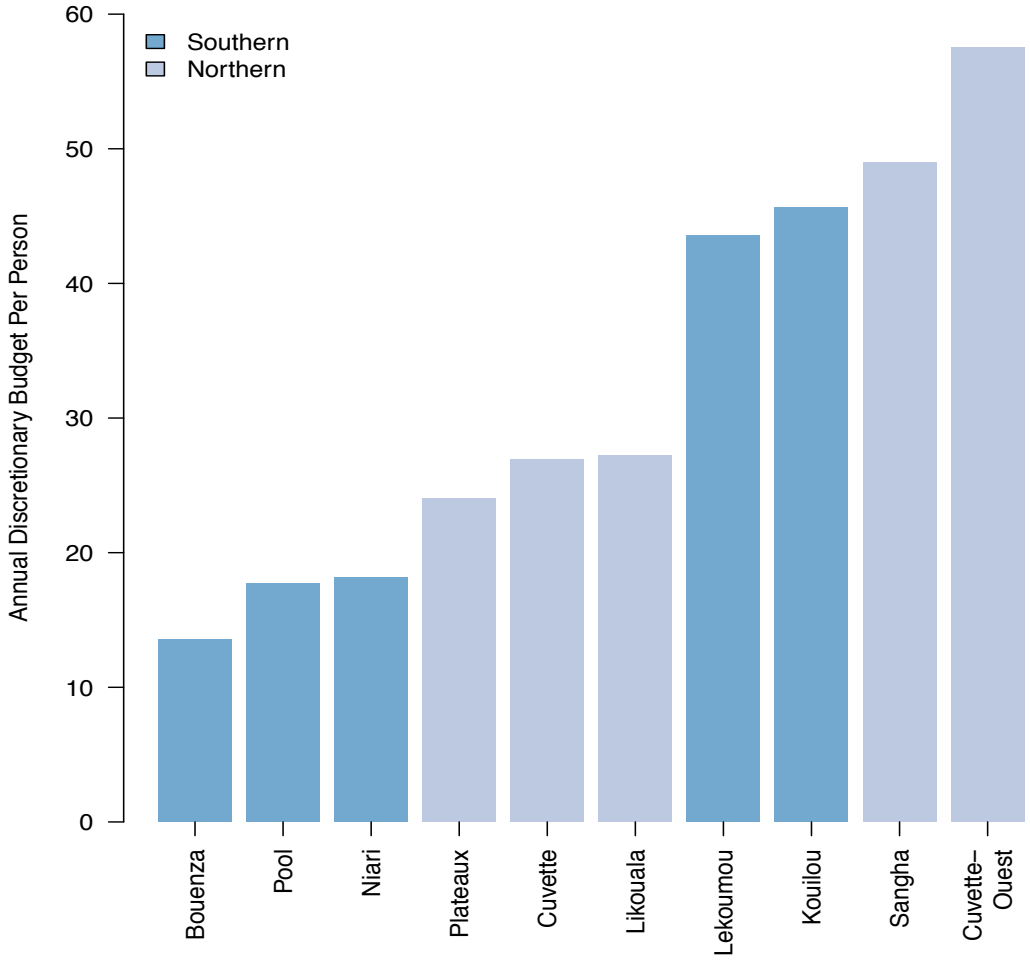

Figure 9.1: The annual operating budgets of regional councils, per capita. Since all regional councils receive a flat sum, the less populated northern regions receive larger budgets per capita.

> gion. You, Mr. Prefect, are thus the guarantor of state sovereignty, of its authority, and of the preservation of peace.[8]

As the "guarantor of state sovereignty," the prefect is accorded broad powers within his region. In addition to commanding its military and police forces, he also holds veto power over *any* action passed by the regional council. These vetoes are apparently quite rare. Given the prefect's broad

[8] *La Semaine Africaine*, 24 January 2012.

powers and Sassou Nguesso's favor, council members are reticent to offend him. And, of course, each of the 10 regional councils is dominated by members of the *majorité présidentielle*, like the prefect.

Apart from reviewing regional council actions, a prefect's daily activities consist of resolving local disputes and managing the surveillance apparatus. For however the regime may dress it – and as Mboulou's allusions to the preservation of peace make clear, the regime makes few attempts to do so – the prefect's central responsibility is to protect the regime itself. Although the prefect is, according to the constitution, apolitical, prefects themselves do little to conceal their allegiance to the ruling PCT. Indeed, just three months before being named prefect of Plateaux region, Edgard Philippe Diafouka Bambelat submitted a letter to *La Semaine Africaine* in which he acknowledged that his "objective is to make the PCT a true electoral machine."[9] Perhaps more importantly, since the regime's survival is derived more from the gun than the ballot box, prefects must also be willing to use force against the citizens they ostensibly govern.

Unsurprisingly, the regime appoints prefects strategically. Congolese citizens widely acknowledge that the regime assigns prefects to regions about which they know nothing: where they have never lived and where they have few friends. Although one former prefect claimed the policy promotes "national integration" and "impartial arbitration" of intra-regional disputes,[10] most citizens disagree. One former warlord, also brother-in-law to a sub-prefect in Bouenza, described the trend "as part of Sassou Nguesso's strategic framework."[11] A prominent candidate in the National Assembly elections of 2012 put it this way:

> If [Sassou Nguesso] names a Niari [regional] prefect who is also from Niari, he can't implement Sassou Nguesso's politics; he can't steal or intimidate. His friends know his parents and his family, and they'll kill his family. A delegation would come to see

[9] *La Semaine Africaine*, 26 August 2011.
[10] Interview with Fulgence Milandou, 23 February 2012.
[11] Interview with Jean Claude, 30 April 2012.

> him, and they would say: "These policies are no good, and we won't accept it; do you want to destroy your own department for Denis Sassou Nguesso?"[12]

Even regional councils rue the policy. A former aide to the Bouenza regional council president said:

> The regime knows how unpopular they are. If they appoint a prefect from Bouenza, he'll be loathe to cheat, to oppress his own population. But with prefects from other regions, their loyalties are undivided.[13]

One high ranking member of the Niari regional council said:

> [The government appoints non-native prefects] to control the population. Even in the army. The director of police here, the commandant of the Niari military zone: they are always from the north, or at least from elsewhere. The regime fears having the region governed by one of its own. The regime has to control them, and if there are uprisings the prefects must be willing to suppress them. ...A native son would know the economic realities, even the social realities. And he would be less likely to waste things, to be corrupted, and to corrupt. He would have the best interest of the region at heart.[14]

Each of Congo's 10 regions contains between 10 and 20 districts, each corresponding roughly to an electoral district. In turn, each district is governed by a sub-prefect. Like prefects, sub-prefects are also appointed by Sassou Nguesso directly. But unlike prefects, sub-prefects have little authority over district military and surveillance detachments. Sub-prefects are busiest, by almost all accounts, during election season, when they enjoy primary responsibility for organization and vote counting. Indeed, according to one high ranking staff members of the Bouenza regional council:

[12] Interview with Marcel Moukoko, 8 July 2013
[13] Interview with Guy Richard Sibi, 10 July 2013.
[14] Interview with Ibouanga, 11 July 2013.

> They're instructed – obligated – by the Interior minister to ensure that such or such candidate is elected. For instance, all the nine candidates that had lost in the first round supported me. [PCT leaders] announced to the population: "If the results don't favor [our candidate] in the end, what a pity it shall be for the sub-prefect."[15]

Indeed, sub-prefects often oversee the police's voter intimidation efforts.

> The commandant of the [regional police] in Nkayi confiscated a huge stack of cards and gave about $5 to young men, told them to go vote, and would then call his officers at the voting booth and tell them to permit it. One observer was even drugged: they offered him a soda and put a drug that made him sleep in it. And then they stuffed the ballot box with votes for [my opponent]. I could name more, but this would just be tiresome. There are voting booths where there are more votes and than voters.[16]

This leads to collusion between local politicians and sub-prefect candidates. In one Bouenza district, the National Assembly deputy petitioned the Interior Ministry to appoint his preferred sub-prefect, who in turn guarantees elections for the deputy. This is apparently common.[17]

As district executive, each sub-prefect oversees each of the villages in his territory. Indeed, Sassou Nguesso's signal contribution to village life has been to abolish the system of elections installed by the National Conference of 1991. Village presidents are now essentially government employees, appointed by the sub-prefect and issued a salary of some $300 per year. In a country where most all villagers live on $1 or $2 per day, this virtually doubles their annual income, leaving them thoroughly indebted to the sub-prefect. Few villagers are happy with the change.[18]

With virtually the entire local government apparatus serving at Sassou Nguesso's pleasure, they have few incentives to respond to citizen concerns. Many are quite vocal about this. The mayor of

[15] Interview with Guy Richard Sibi, 10 July 2013.
[16] Interview with Guy Richard Sibi, 10 July 2013.
[17] Interview with Jean Claude, 1 May 2012.
[18] Interview with Ibouanga, 11 July 2013; interview with Jean Claude, 1 May 2012.

Makélékélé, Brazzaville's second largest *arrondissement*, is Maurice Morel Kihouzou. As the 1997 war concluded, Kihouzou went, house by house, with Cobra soldiers to empty Makélékélé of its residents, all of whom had supported former President Pascal Lissouba or his Prime Minister, Bernard Kolélas, during the war. Kihouzou has served as mayor of Makélékélé since. Functionally illiterate, Kihouzou carefully cultivates Sassou Nguesso's trademark widow's peak haircut, rendering the two almost identical to the unstudied observer. At one point Kihouzou described his responsibilities to the population this way:

> I went to war for Sassou Nguesso. This is my compensation. Don't expect anything from me.[19]

Kihouzou is commensurately insouciant when it comes to the concerns of his constituents. In December 2011 a hippopotamus killed several Makélékélé residents. Rather than marshal Brazzaville's first responders, Kihouzou proposed this, according to *La Semaine Africaine*, in all seriousness:

> The solution will come from involving local elders. [Kihouzou] intends to gather them after New Years Day so that they may speak to this hippopotamus by invoking our ancestors through prayer.[20]

La Semaine Africaine, like virtually all *Brazzavillois* when they heard of it, simply mocked him in response.

9.1.2 Appointing and Removing Prefects

The quantitative evidence affirms what most all southerners believe: Sassou Nguesso appoints regional prefects systematically differently in the south than the north.

[19] Interview with Wilfried Kivouvou, 14 June 2013.
[20] *La Semaine Africaine*, 30 December 2011.

To probe the politics of regional governorship more systematically, I employ a dataset that records all regional prefects since Sassou Nguesso's 1997 return, as well as a range of region- and appointee-level characteristics. I assume that, for each of the nearly 200 region-years since 1997, regional prefect positions could have been given to virtually anyone: the supply of potential appointees is unconstrained. With a logit model, I then estimate the probability that, conditional on the substance of the appointment itself, the appointment was given to a non-native of the region. In addition, I control for whether the prefect appoint is located in the Kouilou region, birthplace of First Lady Antoinette, whose longtime friends constitute the pool of potential appointees, and whether Sassou Nguesso's ultimate prefect choice was a veteran of his 1997 civil war effort. Since larger regions presumably have more acceptable candidates for appointment and may be more difficult to govern, I also control for region population. Although Sassou Nguesso can appoint and terminate regional prefects at will – of his 32 prefect appointments since 1997, 50% served three years or less in office – I include a lagged outcome variable to accommodate the possibility that observations in sequential time periods are correlated.

The results appear in Table 9.1 and are visualized in Figure 9.2. Model 1 suggests that northern regions are governed by a non-native prefect with probability 0.35. For southern regions, however, this probability increases to nearly 0.8. Model 2 controls for the regional provenance of the prefect in year $t-1$, and the results are similar. Assuming that the prefect in year $t-1$ was a native, northern regions are governed by a non-native prefect in year t with a probability of just 0.04. For southern regions, this increases to 0.3. There is some evidence that Sassou Nguesso regards civil war loyalty and nativity to a region as substitutes. In particular, Model 1 suggests that, if Sassou Nguesso names to region s's prefecture a veteran of the civil war effort, the ultimate appointee is more likely to be a regional native. This is intuitive. Participation in the civil war was a costly marker of loyalty, and Sassou Nguesso is less concerned that veterans, if appointed to govern their native regions, will remain loyal to him.

Table 9.1: The Politics of Prefect Appointments

	Appointment Logit	Appointment Logit
Lagged DV		23.85
		(2960.5)
Southern Region	1.810**	2.289*
	(0.483)	(1.157)
Kouilou Region	-2.322**	-2.001
	(0.600)	(1.349)
Civil War Veteran	-2.558**	-20.641
	(0.626)	(2960.5)
ln Regional Population	0.182	-0.119
	(0.280)	(0.786)
N	174	162
Significance levels:	†† : 20% † : 10%	* : 5% ** : 1%

If Sassou Nguesso selects regional prefects strategically, the quantitative evidence suggests he employs tenure strategically as well. As in Chapter 6, I probe the determinants of prefect tenure with a Cox proportional hazard model, which avoids assumptions about "duration dependence": how a prefect's time already in office conditions his probability of removal in a given year. As above, I estimate the probability that prefect *j* is removed in year *t* as a function of the civil war loyalties of the region to which he was appointed. I control too for a variety of other factors: whether prefect *j* is a veteran of Sassou Nguesso's civil war effort, was appointed to the Kouilou region or a non-native region, and the region's population. The results appear in Table 9.2; model 1 excludes a frailty term to control for any unobserved regional effects, while model 2 includes it. The models yield virtually identical results. Prefects appointed to southern regions are five times more likely to be terminated in a given year *t* than their northern counterparts. Even though prefects appointed to southern regions were more likely to have served in the 1997 war effort – to have demonstrated their loyalty to Sassou Nguesso – this demonstrated loyalty is unable to compensate for the sensitivity of their posts.

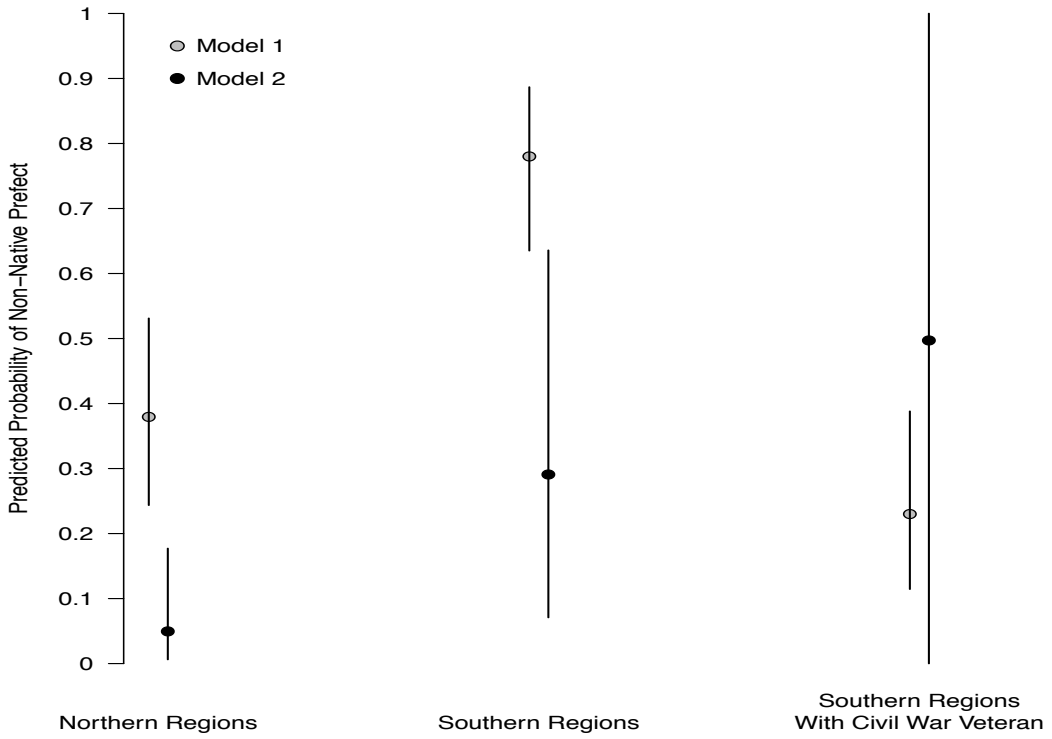

Figure 9.2: Predicting prefect appointments. The predictions for Model 2 are simulated assuming that, in year $t - 1$, region s was governed by a native prefect.

Table 9.2 suggests prefect tenure is a function of two other factors. First, prefects appointed to the Kouilou region – including to the city of Pointe-Noire – are nearly 90% less likely to be removed in a given year t than their counterparts elsewhere. They are, residents of Pointe-Noire affirm, always close associates of First Lady Antoinette. And if Sassou Nguesso can govern a territory with a trusted loyalist – one who is also more acceptable to the local population – so much the better. Second, veterans of the civil war effort – having demonstrated their loyalty to Sassou Nguesso earlier, and despite being appointed to southern regions – are nearly 95% less likely to be removed.

The emergent picture is clear. Sassou Nguesso governs Congo's southern regions with prefects – the "guarantors of regional security" – who hail from elsewhere. He does so to ensure their loyalties

Table 9.2: The Politics of Prefect Tenure

	Removal Probability	Removal Probability
	Cox Model	Cox Model
Southern Region	1.871*	2.124*
	(0.843)	(1.07)
Kouilou Region	-2.183†	-3.414†
	(1.232)	(2.26)
Civil War Veteran	-2.751*	-4.153†
	(1.340)	(2.25)
Non-Native Prefect	-0.831	-1.306
	(0.805)	(1.10)
ln Regional Population	-0.368	-0.754
	(0.636)	(1.14)
Frailty term	No	Yes
N	157	157
Significance levels: †† : 20%	† : 10%	* : 5%	** : 1%	

are undivided, and then shuffles them to ensure their loyalties remain so.

9.1.3 Securing Brazzaville

For all the care with which Sassou Nguesso constructed his local government apparatus, he overwhelmed Brazzaville with force. The map in Figure 9.3 displays the number of total appointments to the internal security apparatus throughout the country between 2005 and 2009. Of the 12, 000 appointments for which I could identify location, nearly 9, 000 were based in Brazzaville.

Figure 9.4 restricts attention to the branches that are most critical for regime survival: the Ground Army, Navy, Air Force, Territorial Surveillance (DGST), Police, and a handful of other units. The largest branch is the Police, with more than 3, 000 appointments between 2006 and 2009. The second largest branch is the Ground Army, at just over 1, 700 appointees. In this context the magnitude of the Presidential Guard is clear. Responsible exclusively for Sassou Nguesso's personal security, the Presidential Guard counted nearly 800 appointments between 2006 and 2009, just less

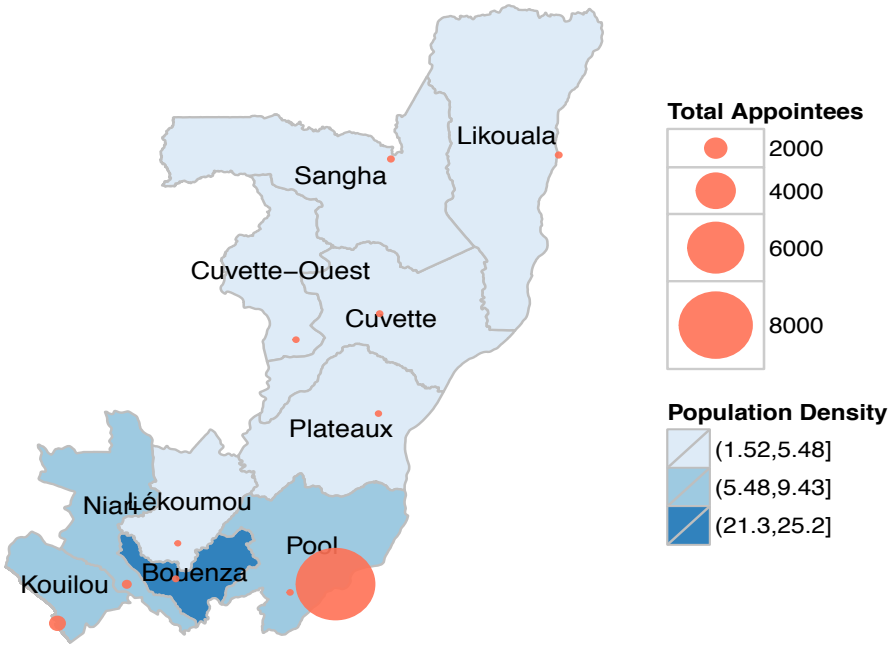

Figure 9.3: Military appointments by location, 2006-2009.

than half the size of the Ground Army. By this measure, the Presidential Guard is equal in size to the Navy and Air Force combined.

The third graphic in Figure 9.4 makes clear that the Presidential Guard is the most thoroughly northern unit of the security apparatus. Of its nearly 750 appointees, some 85% were recruited from Congo's northern regions. For all the military's regional balance, Sassou Nguesso entrusts his security almost exclusively to northerners. The other branches most crucial to the regime's security

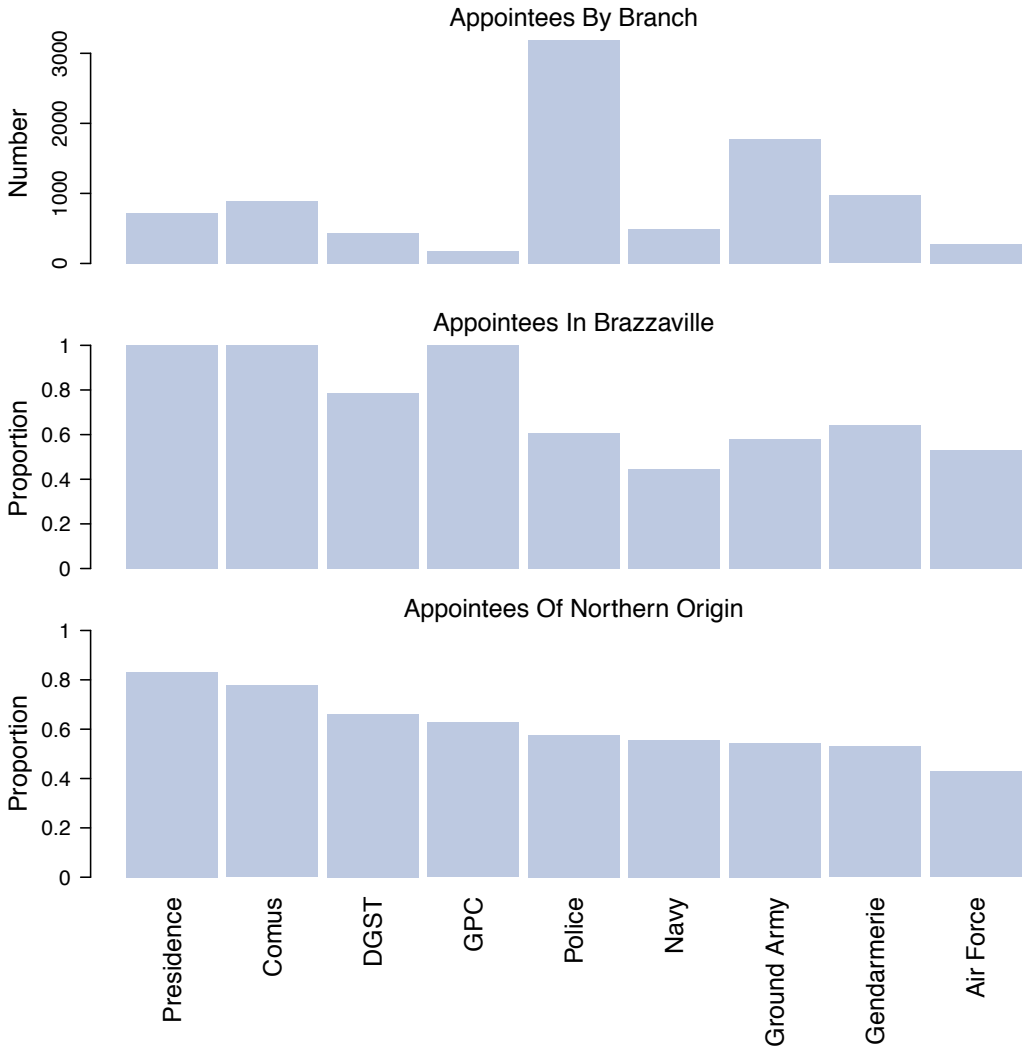

Figure 9.4: The first graphic gives the number of appointees for the branches of the security apparatus most critical to regime survival; it excludes appointments to the corps of first responders, military schools, and such. The second graphic gives the proportion of appointees to each branch stationed in Brazzaville.

are also dominated by northerners. COMUS, the most heavily armed unit of the Ministry of Security and Public Order, is 78% northern, while the Territorial Surveillance office, which bears chief responsibility for domestic intelligence, is 67% northern. Indeed, the branches of the security apparatus in which southerners constitute a majority are the least relevant to regime security: the Air

Force, Schools, and Civil Security department, which oversees first responders – mostly ambulances and firefighters – in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire.

The second and third graphics suggest that the most critical positions in Brazzaville are reserved for northerners. Most southerners also believe Sassou Nguesso populates the local security apparatus as he does regional prefects: by populating hostile areas with security officers from elsewhere. Said one:

> Now that they're in the process of modifying the constitution, the military elements here are almost entirely from the north. If the military soldiers are all from here, they'll have pity on the population. If they're from elsewhere, they probably won't hesitate to open fire on the population in case of trouble.[21]

There is considerable evidence that non-native security officers make life traumatic for local populations in a variety of other ways. Congolese citizens – even those who have no involvement in politics, save the misfortune of being born in opposition strongholds – routinely report rape, torture, and theft.

> I was 16 years old when I was raped by a group of soldiers on my way back from a party .... It is normal for soldiers to wait at a party for the young woman to leave and then stop them on the way back home. ...There is a history in Congo-Brazzaville of tribalism. ...The police and military would regularly pick up women, arrest them, and rape them while they were in custody.[22]

The same young woman later witnessed a different group of soldiers rape her sisters after killing her mother and father. Years later she was raped again, by six different police officers. Men are simply tortured and killed. One recounted how he was detained for coaching a youth soccer team, which local security officers – all northerners – claimed was a rebel group in training:

[21] Interview with Guy Richard Sibi, 10 July 2013.
[22] Anonymous, 24 March 2014.

> Late every night the officers came to my cell and beat me. They would bind my wrists with electrical wire, have me stand on a stool, and tie my bound wrists above my head. Then the officers would hit the back of my calves with a black club with a cross bar handle. While they beat me they would call me a "dirty Bembé dog."[23]

Bembé refers to the man's ethnicity; ethnic Bembés are often assumed to support former President Pascal Lissouba, a southerner and the only freely elected president in Congo's history. The individual was then bound and thrown on a railroad track, where the local security officials expected he would be killed. These abuses, they say, intensify their desire to revolt.

Although Congo's general corps is overwhelmingly northern, its lower ranks are relatively evenly divided between north and south, the data suggest. And contrary to the views of many southerners, the regime employs a much different approach to allocating its local security officers than it does its prefects. The first graphic in Figure 9.5 records the total number of appointees to each of Congo's 10 regions, plus Brazzaville; the second graphic records the proportion of appointees stationed in each region who are of northern extraction. It suggests that Congo's southern regions, like their northern counterparts, are policed by their own. For all of Sassou Nguesso's efforts to ensure that southern region prefects hail from elsewhere, he apparently makes no similar effort with local security officers.

Scholars have long studied military dynamics in autocracies: when military dictatorships emerge [135, 1, 176], how militaries are monitored [60, 147], determinants of military spending [39, 68], and the military's pivotal role in democratic transitions [139, 22, 23, 109, 40, 57]. But students of autocratic politics have allocated less attention to understanding variation within the internal security apparatus itself. Yet scholars have so far allocated less attention to understanding variation within the internal security apparatus itself.

Autocrats confront regions both hostile and friendly, and they must consolidate their control over both. They must do so, indeed, while rendering the threat of violent suppression at least some-

[23] Anonymous, 28 March 2014.

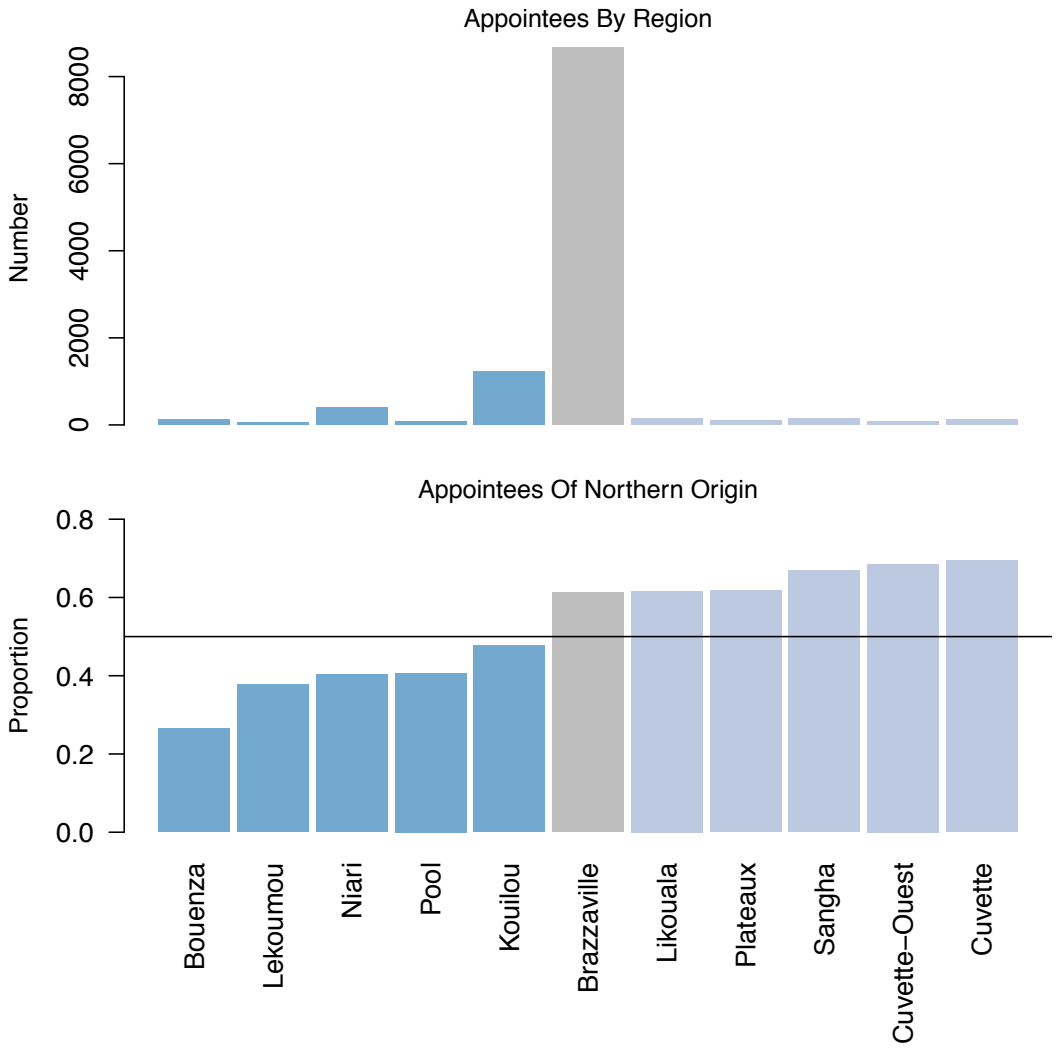

Figure 9.5: The first graphic gives the number of appointees to each of Congo's 10 regions, plus Brazzaville. The second graphic gives the proportion of appointees in each region that are of northern extraction. Congo's southern regions are shaded.

what credible, even when it may not be. To understand how Sassou Nguesso does so – how he balances these competing pressures – I again rely on game theory.

9.2 A Theory of Local Security Appointments

9.2.1 Environment

Consider a society in which an autocrat D presides over region r by appointing a representative local security officer j. Officer j is distinguished by her ethnic affinity $a \in [0, 1]$ with the local population. As $a \to 1$, the officer is drawn from the local population, and thus more sympathetic to their living conditions. She mediates local disputes, proposes effective development programs, and refrains from predation and expropriation. As $a \to 0$, the officer is drawn from an antagonistic ethnic or geographic group, and thus has little sympathy for the local population. Rather than protecting the local population, she preys upon them.

Citizen welfare, in short, is a function of the origins of the agents who govern them. I assume a representative citizen of region r obtains utility

$$u_r(\tau, a) \quad = \quad y_r(1 - \tau) - c(1 - a) - \varepsilon \tag{9.1}$$

where $y_r \geq 0$ gives exogenous income, $c \geq 0$ gives their losses from expropriation by local security officers, and τ gives the tax rate levied by the autocrat. As in previous chapters, the random variable ε measures the local population's hostility towards the autocrat. It may be conditioned by a variety of factors: the autocrat's previous economic policies towards the region or some ethnic or regional affinity between the local population and the autocrat. Although the population obviously knows its true feelings for the autocrat, the autocrat, for his part, does not. Rather, he observes only its distribution:

$$\varepsilon \sim \text{Unif}\left[\overline{\varepsilon} - \frac{1}{2\varphi}, \overline{\varepsilon} + \frac{1}{2\varphi}\right]$$

where $\overline{\varepsilon} \gtreqless 0$ gives the autocrat's belief of the local population's goodwill towards him, and $\varphi > 0$ the relative certainty of his expectation. As $\overline{\varepsilon}$ gets large, the autocrat believes the population is more favorably disposed towards him; likewise, as φ gets large, the autocrat is more certain of the true value of $\overline{\varepsilon}$. This corresponds to our intuition about life as an autocrat: The autocrat has reasonably informed beliefs about his standing among his citizens, but is often far from certain. More broadly, equation (9.1) makes clear that citizen welfare is increasing in the officer's ethnic affinity a.

The local population may also choose to rebel against the autocrat's rule. If the rebellion is successful, they implement democracy, which yields utility

$$u_r(\text{Democracy}) = y_r\left(1 - \tau^D\right) \tag{9.2}$$

where τ^D gives the prevailing tax rate under democracy, which I assume is 0 for simplicity.[24] Under democracy, moreover, I assume the population has no reason to revolt, and local security officers are drawn from the population. If the rebellion fails, the population receives payoff 0.

The autocrat D has two lines of defense against a popular uprising. His first line is the local security officer herself. If the local security officer chooses to suppress a popular uprising, it succeeds only with probability ϱ^{LS}. Suppression, however, is costly, for it may entail psychological trauma or other costs. In particular, if the local security officer suppresses the uprising, her psychological costs are given by $\varkappa a$. The local security officer's utility is then:

$$u_j(a) = \begin{cases} y_j - \varkappa a & \text{if officer } j \text{ suppresses a popular uprising} \\ y_j & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

where y_j gives the salary of officer j. For simplicity, I assume her alternative labor market opportuni-

[24] It may be more useful to think of τ as an extraction rate, since I assume, as in most poor African countries, that public goods are seldom provided.

ties are χ.

Alternatively, the autocrat may choose to forgo local suppression and rely on a mix of carrots and sticks to placate the local population. For in addition to reducing the tax rate τ and appointing local security officers that refrain from expropriation, the autocrat may choose to rely only on his Presidential Guard to suppress popular uprisings. If he does so – or, indeed, if an uprising occurs and local suppression fails – the uprising succeeds with probability ϱ^{PG}. The parameter ϱ^{PG} thus measures the weakness of the autocrat's Presidential Guard. As $\varrho^{PG} \to 0$, the autocrat's Presidential Guard is sufficient to virtually ensure the autocrat's hold on power. Conversely, as $\varrho^{PG} \to 1$, the autocrat will be less inclined to rest his fortunes on his Presidential Guard.

The autocrat aims to maximize both his probability of retaining power and his returns from office. If the autocrat retains power – either because the local population does not rebel or because his security apparatus suppresses it – the autocrat receives utility

$$u_D(\tau) \quad = \quad R + y_r\tau - y_j \tag{9.3}$$

where R, from previous chapters, measures state revenue from non-income taxation sources. If the autocrat is removed from office, by contrast, he receives payoff 0. The autocrat's central tradeoff is this: Appointing local security officers who share an ethnic affinity with the local population increases the latter's welfare – and thus reduces the probability of an uprising – but renders the former more reticent to suppress.

The timing of the game is visualized in Figure 9.6.

9.2.2 Results

The autocrat implements one of two strategies.

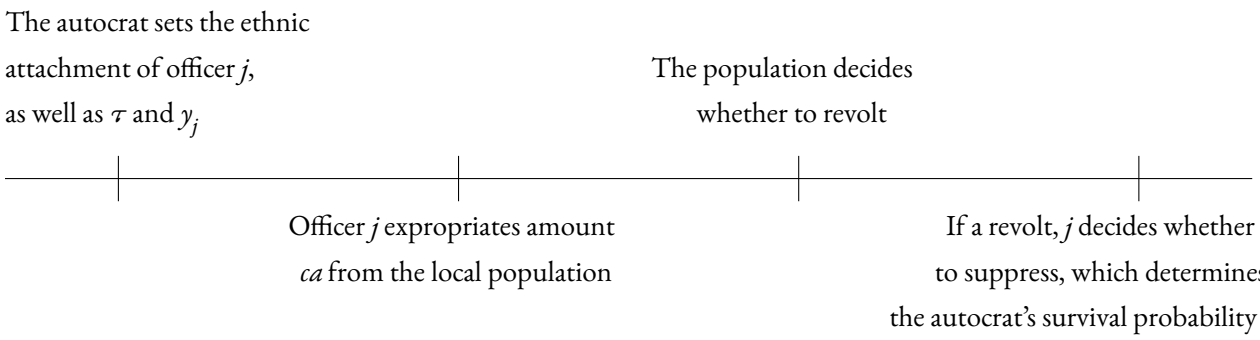

Figure 9.6: Timing of the internal security game.

Lemma 7 ("Development Strategy"). *With the "Development Strategy," the autocrat tries to secure survival by currying goodwill. To do so, he minimizes the expropriation to which citizens are subject by setting the ethnic affinity of the local security officer at* $a_j^{DEV*} = 1$. *Since the autocrat does not rely on officer j to suppress a popular uprising, the autocrat sets* $y_j^* = 0$. *The autocrat sets the tax rate according to regional hostility* $\overline{\varepsilon}$. *Let* $\Gamma^{PG} = -\frac{1}{2}\left(\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{PG}\right)$.

1. *When* $\overline{\varepsilon} > y_r\left(1 - \varrho^{PG}\right) - R - \Gamma^{PG}$, *the tax rate is* $\tau_r^{DEV*} = 0$.

2. *When* $\overline{\varepsilon} \in \left[-y_r\left(1 + \varrho^{PG}\right) - R - \Gamma^{PG}, y_r\left(1 - \varrho^{PG}\right) - R - \Gamma^{PG}\right]$, *the tax rate is*

$$\tau_r^{DEV*} = \frac{1}{2y_r}\left[y_r\left(1 - \varrho^{PG}\right) - \overline{\varepsilon} - R - \Gamma^{PG}\right]$$

3. *When* $\overline{\varepsilon} \leq -y_r\left(1 + \varrho^{PG}\right) - R - \Gamma^{PG}$, *the tax rate is* $\tau_r^{DEV*} = 1$.

The autocrat's probability of survival is

$$\begin{aligned} Pr\left(Survival\right)^{DEV*} &= 1 - \varrho^{PG}\left[\frac{1}{2} + \varphi\left[y_r\left(\varrho^{PG} + \tau_r^{DEV*} - 1\right) + \bar{\varepsilon}\right]\right] \\ &\geq 1 - \varrho^{PG} \end{aligned}$$

The "Development Strategy" described in Lemma 7 curries popular goodwill by creating a local security apparatus that treats the population humanely. Since they are not subject to expropriation, citizen welfare is

$$u_r\left(\tau^*\right) = y_r\left(1 - \tau_r^{DEV*}\right) - \varepsilon$$

Citizens are subjected to only the autocrat's tax rate, set according to what his regional popularity will bear. When he is more popular, he exploits this by setting a more aggressive tax rate; when less popular, he compensates by reducing the tax rate quickly. Since citizens are not subject to expropriation by security officers, the probability of uprising is potentially lower. However, in forgoing a local security apparatus to suppress the population, the autocrat also forgoes a line of defense. In case the strategy fails – in case, that is, of a popular uprising – he survives with only probability $1 - \varrho^{PG}$.

Lemma 8 summarizes the alternative.

Lemma 8 ("Suppression Strategy"). *With the "Suppression Strategy," the autocrat tries to secure survival with force. The autocrat sets τ_r^{SUP*} and a_j^{SUP*} according to regional hostility $\bar{\varepsilon}$. Let $\Gamma^{LS} = \frac{1}{} \left(\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{LS}\right)$.*

1. *When $\bar{\varepsilon} \geq y_r\left(1 - \varrho^{LS}\right) - \Gamma^{LS} + R - \chi$*

$$\begin{aligned} \tau^{SUP*} &= 0 \\ a^{SUP*} &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

2. *When* $\overline{\varepsilon} \in \left[y_r \left(1 - \varrho^{LS}\right) - \Gamma^{LS} + \frac{c}{c+} \left(R - \chi - \kappa\right) - \frac{y_r}{c+}, y_r \left(1 - \varrho^{LS}\right) - \Gamma^{PG} + R - \chi \right]$

$$\begin{aligned} \tau^{SUP*} &= \frac{c+\kappa}{\kappa y_r} \left[y_r \left(1 - \varrho^{LS}\right) - \Gamma^{LS} - \overline{\varepsilon} + \frac{c}{c+\kappa} \left(R - \chi - \kappa\right) \right] \\ a^{SUP*} &= \frac{1}{\kappa} \left[y_r \left(1 - \varrho^{LS}\right) - \Gamma^{LS} - \overline{\varepsilon} + R - \chi \right] \end{aligned}$$

3. *When* $\overline{\varepsilon} \leq y_r \left(1 - \varrho^{LS}\right) - \Gamma^{LS} + \frac{c}{c+} \left(R - \chi - \kappa\right) - \frac{y_r}{c+}$

$$\begin{aligned} \tau^{SUP*} &= 1 \\ a^{SUP*} &= 1 \end{aligned}$$

The autocrat's probability of survival is

$$\begin{aligned} Pr\left(Survival\right)^* &= 1 - \varrho^{LS} \left[\frac{1}{2} + \varphi \left[y_r \left(\varrho^{LS} + \tau_r^{SUP*} - 1 \right) + c \left(1 - a_j^{SUP*} \right) + \overline{\varepsilon} \right] \right] \\ &\geq 1 - \varrho^{LS} \end{aligned}$$

The autocrat sets the local security officer's salary as

$$y_j^{SUP*} = \chi + \kappa a_j^{SUP*} - c \left(1 - a_j^{SUP*} \right)$$

The "Suppression Strategy" described in Lemma 8 has a much different complexion, one that far more closely resembles Sassou Nguesso's policy in southern Congo. Here, the autocrat prepares for a popular uprising by building a robust local security apparatus. To do so, he satisfies the security officer's participation constraint by setting $y_j^{SUP*} \geq y_j^{DEV*}$. Since the security officer's loyalty is more costly when he must open fire on co-ethnics, the autocrat sets $a_j^{SUP*} \leq a_j^{DEV*}$. Since this increases the expropriation to which citizens are subject, this also renders uprisings mores likely.

In steeling himself against unrest, both the narrative in Section 9.1 and the analytics confirm, the autocrat provokes it. But he has a second line of defense on which to rely, and hence his probability of survival is strictly higher than under the Development Strategy, since $\varrho^{LS} < \varrho^{PG}$.

As in Lemma 7, the autocrat exploits whatever popular goodwill he has by setting the tax rate accordingly: where popular, expropriation from taxes is greater. But ethnic attachment and the tax rate are complements. Where the autocrat is more popular, he sets ethnic attachment higher – potentially even at 1 – to facilitate a higher tax rate.

Proposition 7 clarifies when the autocrat prefers the local suppression strategy to the development strategy.

Proposition 7 ("Organizing Security"). *The autocrat prefers the Suppression Strategy when his expected utility exceeds that which he expects from the Development Strategy:*

$$Pr\left(Survival^{SUP*}\right) \times \left(R + y_r\tau_r^{SUP*} - y_j^{SUP*}\right) \quad \geq \quad Pr\left(Survival^{DEV*}\right) \times \left(R + y_r\tau_r^{DEV*}\right)$$

Proposition 7 is most easily understood by considering the limits of popular hostility for the autocrat $\overline{\varepsilon}$. At the limit where the autocrat is extremely popular, such that $\overline{\varepsilon} \to -\infty$, the autocrat sets the same tax rate $\tau_r^* = 1$ and, since the probability of an uprising is 0, his probability of survival is 1. Then his expected utility is

$$E\left[u_D\left(\overline{\varepsilon} \to -\infty\right)\right] = \begin{cases} R + y_r & \text{with the "Development Strategy"} \\ R + y_r - \chi - \varkappa & \text{with the "Suppression Strategy"} \end{cases}$$

Where the autocrat is relatively popular, his expected utility from the "Development Strategy" is strictly higher than from the "Suppression Strategy," since he does not have to compensate the local security officer. By contrast, where the population is extremely hostile to the autocrat – as in southern Congo – the autocrat sets a minimal tax rate and, since the probability of an uprising is 1, his

probability of survival is only whatever can be guaranteed by his Presidential Guard. His expected utility is

$$E\left[u_D\left(\overline{\varepsilon} \to \infty\right)\right] = \begin{cases} R\left(1 - \varrho^{PG}\right) & \text{with the "Development Strategy"} \\ \left(R - \chi + c\right)\left(1 - \varrho^{LS}\right) & \text{with the "Suppression Strategy"} \end{cases}$$

Where the population is so hostile that the autocrat is unable to set a positive tax rate, his interests are almost certainly better served by the "Suppression Strategy." This is true when

$$R\left(\varrho^{PG} - \varrho^{LS}\right) \quad \geq \quad \left(\chi - c\right)\left(1 - \varrho^{LS}\right) \tag{9.4}$$

or when the marginal gain in state revenue afforded by the "Suppression Strategy" exceed the expense of compensating the local security officer. This is always the case when $\chi \leq c$, or when the security officer's alternative labor market opportunities do not exceed whatever he can expropriate from the local population.

Figure 9.7 visualizes this, as well as how the autocrat's preferred strategy shifts with a range of parameters. The dashed line gives the autocrat's expected utility curve – generated from Lemma 7 – as local hostility to the autocrat $\overline{\varepsilon}$ rises. Where the autocrat is most popular, the autocrat can forgo the additional security afforded by a robust local security apparatus, and for which he must pay. But as the autocrat becomes less popular, he reduces the tax rate under the "Development Strategy" τ_r^{PG} earlier, since the relative lack of security renders local uprisings more attractive; this point is given by $\widehat{\varepsilon}^1 = -y_r\left(1 + \varrho^{PG}\right) - R - \Gamma^{PG}$. Of course, the autocrat ultimate reduces the tax rate under the "Suppression Strategy," but he does so considerably later, at $\widehat{\varepsilon}^2 = y_r\left(1 - \varrho^{LS} - \frac{}{c+}\right) - \Gamma^{LS} + \frac{c}{c+}\left(R - \chi - \varkappa\right)$. In this range, although the autocrat would be able to set a higher tax rate by employing the "Suppression Strategy," he chooses the lower tax rate with the "Development Strategy" since it does not compensate for the additional cost of the local security apparatus.

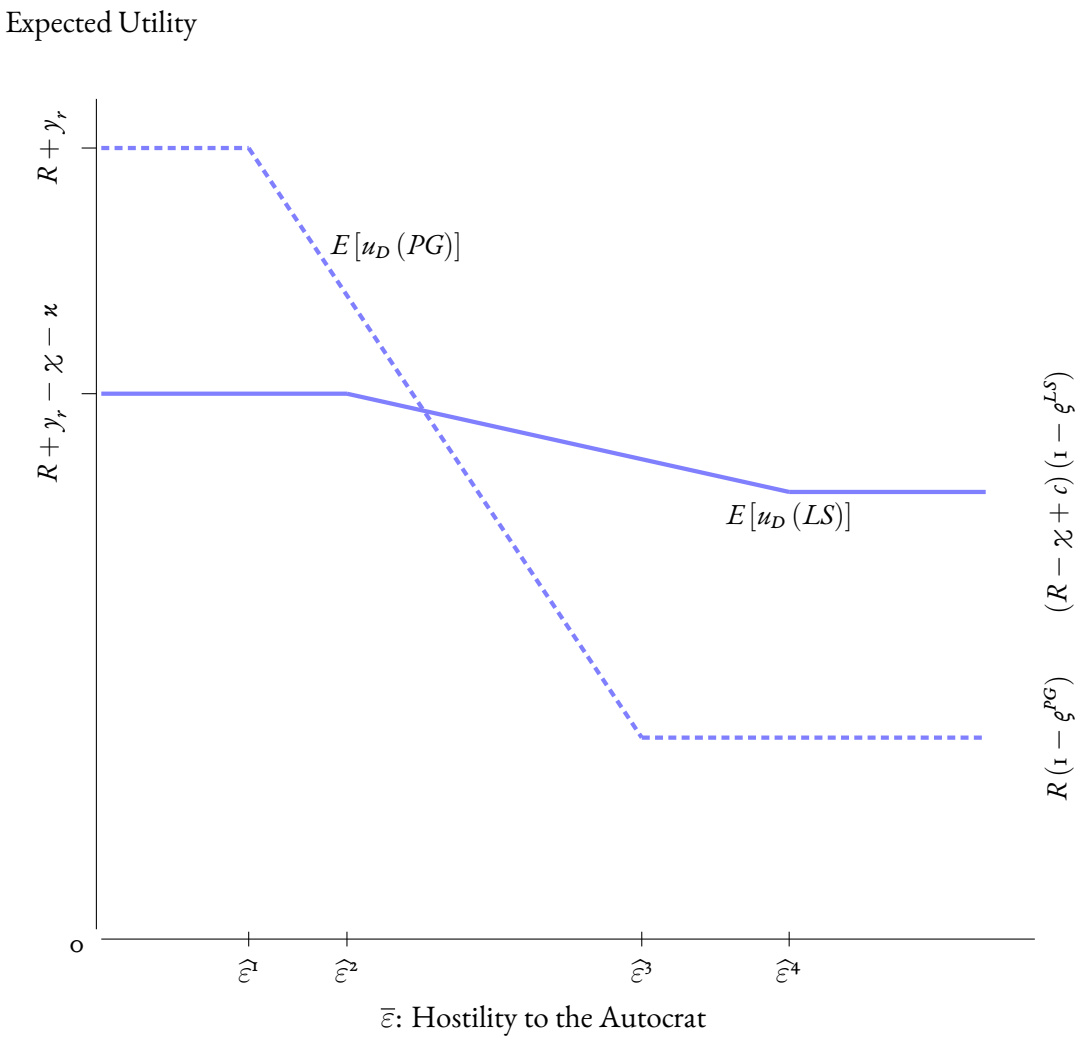

Figure 9.7: Proposition 7 visualized as a function of $\overline{\varepsilon}$, or the autocrat's beliefs about the local population's hostility to the regime.

Assuming that (9.4) holds, however, the curves cross, in this analysis at the point between $\widehat{\varepsilon}^2$ and $\widehat{\varepsilon}^3$. Henceforth the autocrat is better served with the "Suppression Strategy." Where the autocrat is loathed, the "Suppression Strategy" enables him to keep a positive tax rate longer and, since the local security officer expropriates local citizens, defray his compensation obligations χ with c. He does this, indeed, with his minimum survival probability potentially much higher than when he relies exclusively on his Presidential Guard.

The parameters that condition the autocrat's choice of strategy most clearly, then, are those that shift the two expected utility curves vertically. Four parameters prove critical. First, when the autocrat can negotiate down compensation for his local security apparatus, it becomes a more attractive resource to secure power. Again, when autocrats are strong, they deploy strategies that secure their power even when the population loathes them. Second, the parameter c rises as local security officers generate more income through expropriation – the case in societies where property rights are weak and ethnic divides particularly salient – rendering local suppression again more attractive. Third, as $\varkappa$ gets large, the autocrat must compensate ethnically similar security officers more to implement local suppression. In so doing, he prefers the development strategy for a greater parameter range than otherwise. Finally, changes in state revenue R render local suppression more attractive as well, for the additional security provided is simply more valuable.

The model also explains Sassou Nguesso's apparent interest in shuffling regional prefects in southern regions – where he pursues the "Suppression Strategy" – at far higher rates than in northern regions. Southern-based prefects must be prepared to suppress the populations they govern. Sassou Nguesso must also compensate them for this. Even though their ethnic affinities are low, they must be prevented from developing them: from marrying southern women, having children, and all the other personal attachments that render their loyalties more difficult to acquire, at best, and uncertain at worst.

These comparative statics provide a foundation for understanding variation in ethnic affinity at

different levels of the local security apparatus, particularly when autocrats employ the suppression strategy. The officers most critical for suppression – senior commanders who give orders to subordinates – should have the lowest ethnic affinity a^*, since their loyalty is central to the autocrat's survival. By contrast, junior security officers tend to interact most with the population. Moreover, since junior officers are also far more numerous and less costly to purchase, the loyalty of one is far less vital for the autocrat's hold on power. Consequently, autocrats are likely to increase ethnic affinity at lower levels of the security apparatus, since doing so reduces expropriation and avoids exacerbating popular frustration.

9.3 Ethnicity and the Local Security Apparatus

Sassou Nguesso's governance of Congo's southern regions closely resembles the Suppression Strategy described in Lemma 8; his policies in northern regions are more akin to those in Lemma 7. Moreover, Lemma 8 confirmed the paradox of Section 9.1. In developing a more robust local security apparatus, Sassou Nguesso renders popular uprisings in southern regions more likely. But it also proposes a solution. It suggests that Sassou Nguesso can render his rule more palatable in the south by limiting the daily exactions imposed by the numerous junior officers if he uses local recruits more liberally. Senior officers, whose loyalty in case of unrest is critical but who expropriate less from the local population, are thus most likely to be drawn from elsewhere.

As Section 9.1 made clear, southern-based regional prefects are overwhelmingly appointed to their non-native regions. To probe the construction of the internal security apparatus below the prefect level, I employ the dataset detailed in Section 9.1.3. Again, I assume that each of the 15, 000 appointments for which I have data could have been given to virtually anyone: the supply of potential appointees is relatively unconstrained. I then employ a logit model to estimate the probability that, conditional on the substance of the appointment itself – that its rank, location, and relevance

to regime security – the appointment was given to a northerner. To accommodate the possibility that Sassou Nguesso may appoint southerners to southern-based locations at lower ranks, I include an interaction term for military rank and southern location. As a robustness check, I also estimate the probability that a particular appointment was given to a native of northern Plateaux or Cuvette, Sassou Nguesso's home regions.

In addition, I control for a range of appointment-level characteristics. Since Sassou Nguesso may prefer to more heavily police regions closer to Brazzaville, I control for the distance, in miles, of the appointment location to Brazzaville. I also control for region size, since more populous regions may simply require a stronger military presence for reasons that otherwise have little to do with Sassou Nguesso's political strategy. I also record whether the prefect in which an appointment is located is non-native. As Section 9.1 made clear, Sassou Nguesso appoints regional prefects strategically, and hence may feel less of a threat from regions governed by a non-native. Finally, I record whether an appointment is based in Brazzaville, which may render it more sensitive. I also include a full set of year fixed effects, which control for any unobserved annual characteristics.

The results appear in Table 9.3. Consistent with the narrative in Section 9.1 and the model in Section 9.2, appointments to the most sensitive security units – the Presidential Guard, Territorial Surveillance apparatus, Para-Commando Unit, and COMUS – are overwhelmingly filled with northerners. Northerners are also more likely to be stationed in the Kouilou region, responsible for Congo's lucrative oil reserves. Figure 9.8 visualizes the predicted probability that a given appointment is directed to a northerner, or to a native of Cuvette or Plateaux. A typical Brazzaville-based appointment – such as military headquarters or logistics – is as likely to be given to a northerner as to a southerner. This probability rises to roughly 65% for the Para-Commando Unit, 70% for Territorial Surveillance, 80% for COMUS, and nearly 90% for the Presidential Guard. Although the Congolese security apparatus is evenly balanced between north and south, these results make clear that Sassou Nguesso entrusts his security exclusively to northerners.

Table 9.3: Building the security apparatus

	Northern Appointee	Cuvette/Plateaux Appointee
	Logit	Logit
Southern Region	-1.211**	-0.942**
	(0.233)	(0.2266)
Rank	0.000	-0.017†
	(0.009)	(0.009)
Southern × Region	0.047*	0.05423*
	(0.023)	(0.023)
Kouilou Region	0.781**	0.708**
	(0.274)	(0.273)
Presidence	1.372**	0.962**
	(0.104)	(0.087)
DGST	0.475**	0.444**
	(0.105)	(0.101)
Para-Commando	0.305†	0.199††
	(0.159)	(0.154)
COMUS	1.014**	0.769**
	(0.085)	(0.077)
Non-Native Prefect	0.085	0.082
	(0.133)	(0.132)
ln Region Population	-0.249	-0.228
	(0.199)	(0.195)
Brazzaville Distance	-0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)
Brazzaville Based	0.047	0.384
	(0.566)	(0.546)
Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
N	11,026	11,161
Significance levels:	†† : 20% † : 10% * : 5% ** : 1%	

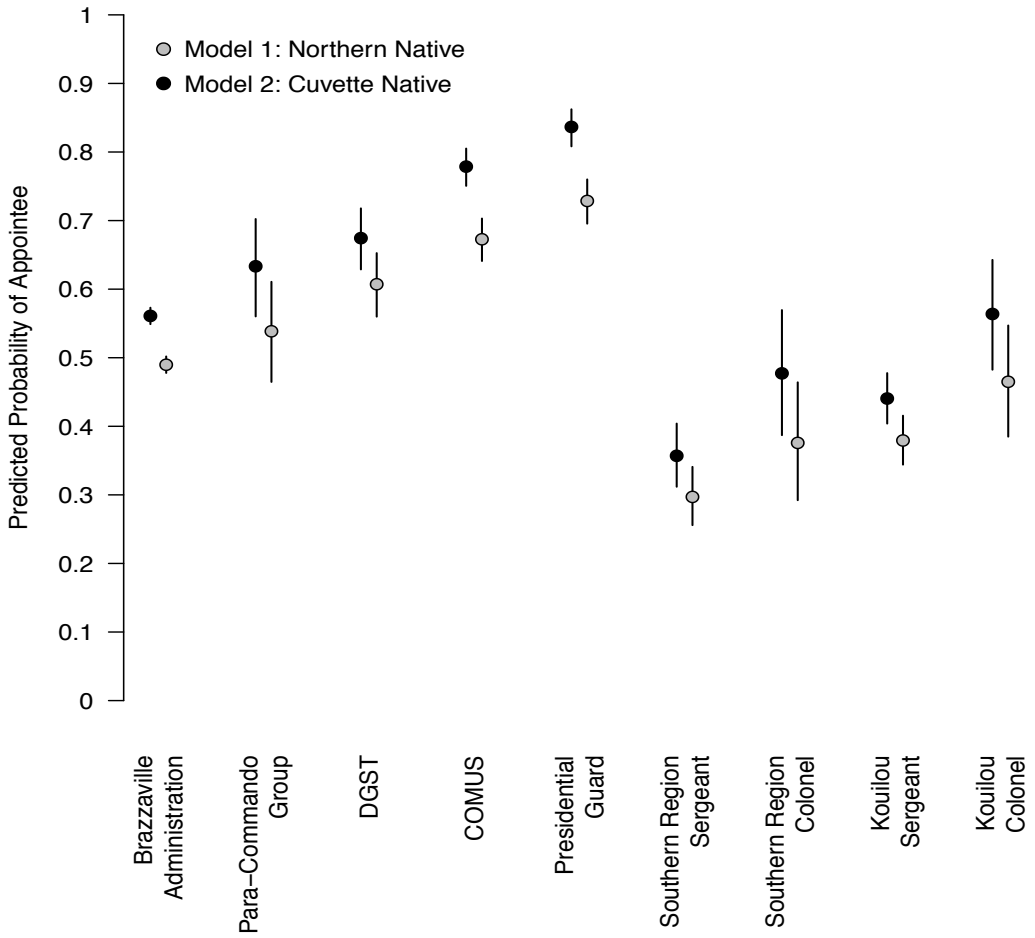

Figure 9.8: For each of the appointment categories on the x-axis, the y-axis records the probability that it was given to a northerner, or to a native of Cuvette or Plateaux. The predicted probabilities were generated from the results in Table 9.3.

Where, then, are the military's southerners stationed? If Sassou Nguesso sought primarily to ensure that soldiers stationed in the southern regions would violently suppress popular uprisings, we might expect the southern regions to be policed almost exclusively by northerners. That, however, is not the case, as the model in Section 9.2 suggested. The evidence in Table ?? and Figure 9.8 suggest that southern regions are overwhelmingly policed by southerners. There is important variation

by rank, however. Just as regional prefects are imported, so too are the senior security officers: the colonels, especially, whose obedience to the regional prefect is critical. A southern sergeant appointment is given to a northerner with only 0.3 probability. A colonel position in the same southern region is given to a northerner with roughly 0.5 probability. In short, Sassou Nguesso employs native sons to police their home regions on the regime's behalf, even if ultimate command authority remains with northerners.

9.4 Conclusion

Organizing modern repression is difficult. First, reliant on foreign aid and investment – and hence more bound by the international community's human rights norms – Africa's autocrats are less able to credible threaten violence than ever before. To render his implicit threats more credible, this chapter finds, Sassou Nguesso populates southern regions with prefects from afar. To ensure their undivided loyalties, he shuffles them frequently. But by populating the local security apparatus with foreigners, Sassou Nguesso risks provoking the popular unrest he aims to prevent. While non-native security officers employ violence more freely – or at least can threaten violence more easily – they also prey upon the local population. They are more likely to expropriate their property and offend their dignity. Accordingly, Sassou Nguesso constructs the local security apparatus strategically. While keeping command authority in the hands of northerners, he draws junior officers overwhelmingly from the local population. In so doing, he creates local collaborators who police their hostile native regions on the regime's behalf. Financial resources are critical to securing collaboration. But, as before, so too are the beliefs of his prospective collaborators. When they have few options outside the regime, they are more likely to join it.

Part IV

The Way Forward

10

Conclusion

10.1 The Argument

There are two Africas: one democratic, the other autocratic. To outsiders, their politics are identical. Virtually all African autocrats now govern with parliaments and organize regular, multiparty elections. They have little choice. Since the end of the Cold War, Western governments have required nominally democratic institutions in exchange for economic aid, investment, and debt relief. In an

era of YouTube and smartphones, violent repression is impossible to conceal from the international community. Life as an autocrat has thus grown more perilous. Since 1989, autocrats forced to government with nominally democratic institutions have been nearly 80% more likely to lose power each year than autocrats who proscribe political competition. Accordingly, between 1986 and 2000, the number of autocracies in Africa fell from 45 to 30.

As Africa's autocrats learned to survive despite democratic institutions, the rate of democratization slowed to a trickle. To understand how, this dissertation focuses on the Republic of Congo, ruled by Denis Sassou Nguesso for all but five years since 1979. Using original data on the Congolese elite, their political parties, the elections in which they compete, and the country's internal security apparatus – and making sense of this data with formal, qualitative, and quantitative methods – this dissertation finds that Africa's autocrats confront challenges old and new with different constraints. Accordingly, they find different solutions.

Since the end of the Cold War, nearly 70% of the world's autocrats who have lost power through non-orderly means have fallen to regime insiders: the people to whom they entrust their government's most important portfolios [175]. Whereas autocrats once relied on single parties to bridle elite ambitions, in Africa they now secure elite compliance with social tools. By redefining the pool of candidates for the regime's most lucrative positions, Africa's autocrats employ a "politics of hope," which induces loyalty even when elites are excluded from the regime. To monitor appointees, Africa's contemporary autocrats create social institutions, in which new recruits interact with the autocrat's most trusted aides. Autocrats supplement these with parallel governments. Akin to tournaments, Africa's autocrats force elites who are separated by ethnic cleavages or family rivalries to compete against each other for favor. When Africa's autocrats deploy these monitoring devices effectively, they forgo arbitrary purges in favor of predictable tenure policies, which reward competence with reappointment.

Modern African autocrats are far more concerned about popular uprisings. The international

community's insistence on regular elections – however fraudulent – creates "focal moments," when citizens are engaged in the political process and aware of shared discontent. Since they believe that international attention will shield them from repression, opposition leaders are eager to mobilize unrest. As a result, Africa's autocrats are far more likely to lose power during election years – executive and legislative alike – than ever before. Africa's autocrats must prevent their citizens from flooding the streets in the first place, even though these "focal moments" are more common than ever. This institutional landscape compels autocrats to fashion electoral alliances with opposition leaders. By joining the regime they once impugned, opposition leaders sacrifice public credibility for ministerial perquisites. Popular goodwill constitutes an insurance policy, and so Africa's autocrats commission surrogates to generate it. With violent repression less credible, autocrats must also construct their internal security apparatuses in ways that are threatening without being too provocative. These techniques build upon – and often reinforce – each other. Together, they constitute Sassou Nguesso's "established" equilibrium of autocratic politics.

As does Svolik [176], this dissertation suggests a second, "contested" equilibrium, which is far less stable. In it, autocrats lack the resources to offer a wage premium to elites and finance parallel governments. Without a "politics of hope" and an effective monitoring apparatus, autocrats are unable to construct social institutions. They shuffle elites arbitrarily, which incentivizes the malfeasance it is designed to prevent. Vulnerable to elite conspiracies, autocrats lack access to electoral alliances with opposition parties. Since opposition leaders know the autocrat is weak, their support is prohibitively expensive. Likewise, autocrats choose not to employ surrogates to generate goodwill, for they question their loyalties. Since the edifice of rule is weak, autocrats cannot recruit native sons to police their hostile native regions, rendering uprisings more likely still.

10.2 Future Priorities

This dissertation suggests a range of possibilities for future research. When do executive and legislative elections generate popular protests, and when do they bring down autocrats? What are the effects of smartphones and YouTube on popular protests and autocratic response?[1] How does reliance on Western creditors condition autocratic behavior? Why have military *coups d'état* become so rare?[2] When do autocrats build pseudo human rights NGOs, and when are they effective? Does press freedom render government propaganda more or less common in Africa's autocracies? How did the two Africas emerge in the first place? Students of contemporary Africa increasingly employ field experiments to study public good provision, local governance, ethnic voting, and civil wars that ended decades ago. In so doing, they focus almost exclusively on democratic Africa. This dissertation underscores just how much of the continent remains understudied.

My first priority for the coming months is to prepare the manuscript for submission. With presidential elections scheduled for July 2016, I hope the book appears in print by May 2016. I envision adding a pair of additional chapters that demonstrate the book's generality. The first will focus on "contested" equilibria: François Bozizé of the Central African Republic, Mamadou Tandja of Niger, Laurent Gbagbo of Cote d'Ivoire, and Salva Kiir Mayardit of South Sudan. The second will focus on "established" equilibria: Paul Biya of Cameroon, Paul Kagame of Rwanda, Omar Bongo of Gabon, Blaise Campaoré of Burkina Faso, Idriss Déby of Chad, Teodoro Obiang of Equatorial Guinea, and Gnassingbé Eyadéma and Faure Gnassingbé of Togo.

With these chapters, I hope to emphasize that the problems described in Chapters 3 through 9 are common and that their solutions are correlated. I hope also to sharpen the dissertation's arguments

[1] Pierskalla and Hollenbach [145] find that cell phone access in Africa is related to civil war onset.

[2] Clark [46] suggests that liberalizing African governments inoculate themselves from military threats with popular legitimacy. Yet even Africa's autocrats are increasingly immune to the military, and so the causal factor may lie elsewhere.

about the role of financial resources and beliefs in sustaining modern African autocracy. As written, the dissertation elucidates this interaction with game theory and clarifies it with narrative. But both could be stronger, I believe.

I would obviously appreciate any thoughts you might have on this, as well as anything else. In the meantime, thank you for reading this, and for your support during these years. I look forward to acknowledging you all in the dissertation's Acknowledgements section.

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